Quality aspects of vocational higher education, with special reference to hospitality management

Thesis

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Thesis submitted to the Open University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Technology

October 2003

(Revised October 2004)

Maurice George Palin M.Ed., BSc(Hons), PGCE

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Abstract

Quality in vocational higher education was investigated, using hospitality management as the focus. The definitions, measurement and improvement of quality (including bench marking) were explored. An analysis of the literature on quality in higher education, using books, journal articles and publications from official bodies was made and reported in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Using the literature review, structured interviews and a focus group discussion, a questionnaire related to hospitality management education was devised. It was tested by a pilot study and subsequently modified. The final questionnaire had 90 items. It was administered in Spring 2000. The questionnaire was distributed to – 315 academics, 200 employers, 71 alumni and 171 students – stakeholders in hospitality management degree courses. Respondents were asked to evaluate, using a five point Likert scale: 1) the importance of the items for quality of the courses ("ideal scale"), and 2) the extent to which the items were being achieved ("actual scale"). The results were analysed by comparing the means for each item on each scale for the four stakeholder groups. Means on the ideal scale (aspirations) were higher, item for item, than those on the actual scale (achievements).

Skills, including operational skills specific to hospitality management, were considered as important components of the courses by all stakeholder groups. Factor analysis suggested that facets of quality were: employment related, operational skills, vocational preparation, generic skills, course content, computer use, influences on courses, assessment, process, and learning experiences. Based on the results, there are proposals for improving hospitality management degree courses and suggestions for further research into the complex notion of quality in higher vocational education.

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Finally, a big thank you to my family whose interest and encouragement helped sustain my resolve to complete the work.

An historical perspective

The research reported in this thesis took place over an extended period of part time study, between 1995 and 2003. The literature review was ongoing, at varying levels of intensity, throughout most of the period of the study.

A number of key events relating to quality issues in higher education have occurred during the period of the research. Some of these applied to all aspects of higher education, others were of particular importance to hospitality management. The time frame of these events and their relationship to the various stage of the research are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Key events and the current research

Key event	Research stage	Period of research activity
	Literature review	Initially 1995/6, with periodic updating
Report of National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 1997	Interviews and focus groups	1997
Higher Education Quality Council replaced by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 1997		
Quality Assurance Agency Subject Review process began 1998	Questionnaire development	1998-1999
Quality Assurance Agency Pilot Benchmark Statements published 1999	Pilot survey	1999
Unit 25 (Hospitality, Leisure, Tourism and Sports) Benchmark Statements published 2000	Main survey	Spring 2000
Hospitality Management Subject Review 2000/2001	Data collation	2000
Hotel, Catering and International Management Association publish the *Corpus of Management Excellence* 2001	Analysis of data	2000-2002
Government White Paper: The Future of Higher Education 2003	Conclusions and final updating of the literature	2003

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a background to the research and an overview of the work carried out.

As recorded in the historical note a number of relevant documents were published during the course of the research. In particular, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) relevant subject benchmark statements were published in 2000, following the completion of the survey described in Chapter 8. A cut off date of December 2002 was established for literature to be included in the literature survey. However, inevitably, relevant literature continued to be published *e.g.* the White Paper on the future of higher education published in 2003.

1.1 Outline of thesis and the research question

The overall purpose of the research, and hence the research question, was to examine what were considered important aspects of the quality of hospitality management courses at the higher education level by the various stakeholders. An important related issue was the extent to which courses are meeting the aspirations of the various stakeholders. The hypotheses being:

i) that it would be possible to identify such quality features and evaluate the achievement of the current provision with regard to them.

ii) that differences exist between various stakeholder groups with regard to their view of hospitality management higher education.

iii) that courses fail to meet the aspirations of the stakeholders.

In order to investigate this, respondents from various stakeholder groups concerned with hospitality management higher education were consulted. This provided an overview of the issues and how the various groups perceived them.

Resulting from this, an attempt was made to identify aspects of courses which were particularly important. Additionally, aspects that were not meeting the aspirations of the stakeholders were identified. Some recommendations concerning hospitality management higher education courses were made.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aims of the research were to determine what features of higher education hospitality management courses were considered contributors to the quality of the courses; to what extent these aspects were being delivered; and whether the view of this varied across the various stakeholder groups.

In order to achieve the aims, a number of objectives were identified:

1) to review the literature relating to higher education in general, and hospitality management higher education in particular;

2) to devise a questionnaire to gather data from a number of stakeholder groups;

3) to analyse and evaluate the data from the questionnaire and to attempt to establish which aspects were considered important to the quality of hospitality management higher education;

4) to ascertain *via* the questionnaire, the extent to which expectations concerning quality aspects were being met;

5) to make recommendations for course development and delivery in hospitality management higher education.

1.3 Problems with defining quality

As with any issue concerning quality, ascertaining what is meant by the term "quality" in the particular context of interest has to consider a variety of possibilities. This is problematic, not least because the definition varies with the perspective of the definer. Consequently, the various stakeholders in hospitality management higher education may have differing views about what is meant by quality in this context (Harvey & Green, 1993). This has an important effect on any quality evaluation, and on any recommendations concerning the quality of courses.

1.4 Benchmarking

As discussed further in chapter 3, benchmarking can be regarded as a quality evaluation and enhancement tool in a variety of contexts. The decision to include them as part of the Quality Assurance Agency procedures (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998a), followed the recommendation in the National Committee of Enquiry Report into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997).

The benchmarking process used by the QAA lent itself to use as part of the subject assessment. In the Unit 25 benchmarks (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a), the variety of subject disciplines included made a general approach inevitable. This is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.

1.5 Vocational higher education

Courses that attempt to prepare people for employment are often labelled vocational education. Some of these are providing preparation for general employment, by trying to inculcate skills that are required in a variety of jobs. Others are more focussed on specific industries.

Partly as a result of the National Committee of Enquiry Report into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997), the relationship between higher education and employment has been given greater attention in recent years. The emphasis has been particularly on the inculcation of generic transferable skills, and not all of these are necessarily related to employment. However, the vocational relevance of higher education has gained greater prominence as a result. The intention to use employment outcomes as a performance indicator, for higher education institutions, looks certain to emphasise this aspect (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2000). Aspects of vocational education are discussed in chapter 4.

1.6 Hospitality management higher education

Hospitality management courses epitomise the industry specific type of vocational higher education. However, as the industry is wide and diverse, the courses have to reflect this variation. The conflict that can occur between academic perspectives and the vocational ones is particularly acute in hospitality management. This is partly a result of the relatively recent introduction into higher education institutions of hospitality management courses; and partly due to the experienced based career progression typical of the industry. The low proportion of graduate managers is an important related factor, (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998).

Hospitality management is a relative newcomer to the range of vocational higher education courses. Honours degrees began appearing in the late 1980s. In many countries other than the UK, hospitality management is not available at degree level. This relatively recent emergence has meant that the appropriate "academic culture" is still evolving. A wide range of subject disciplines has come together to produce courses of this type, and there is some conflict between the various approaches represented by this. This is exacerbated by the dichotomy of the industrial attitude. On the one hand, resenting too much emphasis on "academic" areas and not enough on "operational" (Quest, 1997). On the other hand, believing that operational skills can be learnt in post, and that the main requirements for education are to provide a conceptual context, and to inculcate personal skills that can be used in a variety of situations (Council for Hospitality Management Education, 2001). However, the impression gleaned from the "trade press" is that the latter view is a minority one (Quest, 1997). In order to try to encompass this spread, the target groups, for the research reported here, included academic staff from a number of universities, students from a much smaller number, as well as representatives of employers from a range of hospitality management operations concerned with graduate training and employment.

There are a number of perspectives on hospitality management education, which derive from the variety of groups that have a stake in the system. These groups are not homogenous, and will each encompass a variety of viewpoints (Harvey & Green, 1993). Any hospitality management programme, which is to be regarded as good quality, must attempt to reconcile these differing perspectives.

1.7 Overview of empirical work

This section provides a background to the empirical work carried out to explore the research question.

As stated in section 1.1, the overall purpose of the research, and hence the research question, was to examine what were considered important aspects of the quality of hospitality management courses at the higher education level, and the extent to which courses were meeting the aspirations of the various stakeholders.

The research methodology, outlined below, was therefore designed to identify possible factors affecting the quality of hospitality management courses, using a variety of sources. Various stakeholder groups were then surveyed, to try to ascertain the importance and relevance of these factors, in the context of the quality of an hospitality management programme. An analysis of the results of the survey was made, in an attempt to determine the key factors and to highlight any issues. This was felt to be the most appropriate way of bringing together the various perspectives bearing on the quality aspects of hospitality management education. It was hoped that this would give some basis for developing and evaluating the quality features of an hospitality management programme. In any survey, the questions of validity and reliability are important. Consequently, this was true of the current research. This is discussed in section 5.5.

The empirical work was divided into a number of stages:

1. Establishing a wide range of criteria that were used by various stakeholders, to evaluate the quality of hospitality management higher education programmes. This stage was subdivided in terms of both procedures and sources, into two distinct phases. Phase one looked at written published material, and extracted relevant criteria from these as

discussed later. Phase two involved a small number of interviews, from which criteria were identified.

2. The organisation and consolidation of these criteria for use in the next two stages.

3. The piloting of the final draft of the questionnaire, and adjustment of the questionnaire in the light of the findings of the pilot.

4. The main data collection stage, which consisted of administering the questionnaire to a variety of stakeholder groups.

5. The analysis of the survey results, to determine the attitudes displayed by the various stakeholder groups to the suggested factors.

6. The determining of what conclusions could be drawn from the analysed data.

1.8 Literature review overview

The next three chapters review the literature on a number of aspects of direct relevance to the research question including the notion of quality and its measurement, the key technique of benchmarking and the issue of vocationalism in higher education.. This begins in the next chapter with an exploration of the problematic concept of quality in higher education.

Chapter 2: Quality in higher education

What is meant by the term "quality" and how it can be measured is a contentious issue. The notion of quality is highly subjective, context driven and related to the intended purpose. However, evaluating and improving quality depends upon determining appropriate criteria. This chapter explores the concept of quality and how it can be defined. The problematic issue of what is meant by the term quality in the context of higher education is examined. The assessment of quality, in particular its assessment within the context of higher education, is discussed. The final part of the chapter looks at the model of total quality management, and its appropriateness to the higher education environment.

2.1. Introduction

In order to explore the concept of quality in relation to higher education, it is necessary to consider the various facets which contribute to its use. When discussing quality in higher education, three factors seem to be of particular importance:

a) the definition of what is meant by the term "quality";

b) the criteria used to determine it;

c) the application of these criteria in the assessment of quality.

These three areas are examined in turn using material published by a number of authors writing about higher education.

2.2 Definition of quality

Defining quality is difficult, and any definition is context driven. This section considers some of the issues and problems surrounding the defining of quality in the higher education context. A number of definitions that have been proposed in the literature are presented.

2.2.1 The problem of defining quality

In order to make much progress on the issue of quality and its assessment in any context, it is necessary to explore what is meant by the term "quality" itself. Therefore, the first problem is to arrive at a suitable definition in the context of higher education. However, this proves to be problematical; indeed Pounder (1999) claims that a meaningful definition is not possible. It may be significant that the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC)[1] seemed to shy away from producing a definition. In its *"Guidelines on Quality Assurance"* (Higher Education Quality Council, 1994), despite implying that various definitions are given in appendices, only one is actually quoted: *"Quality: the totality of features or characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy a given need."* (page 61). This does not define quality itself; it defines it in terms of what is being assessed for quality. It is common to link "quality" with a process used in its evaluation.

Frazer (1994) notes a number: quality control, quality assurance, quality enhancement, quality audit, and quality assessment; but also notes that the terminology is not consistent which can lead to confusion. The use of quality in conjunction with a

[1] The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) replaced the HEQC, and the quality assurance divisions of the English and Welsh funding Councils, in 1997.

process, highlights the fact, that when talking about quality, it is necessary to have in mind why the issue is being discussed, and the context in which this is being done. Imrie (1998) is unusual in claiming that quality is easily definable in magnitude and direction. Most authors suggest that quality is an elusive concept to grasp and articulate. Nagel & Kvernbekk (1997) stress its complexity, if the necessary holistic view is taken. Generally people have an idea about how they would recognise the quality of something but trying to describe it is much more difficult. The often quoted Pirsig (1974) seems to have produced the definitive expression of this dilemma: "*But when you try to say what quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about.*" (Pirsig, 1974, page 187).

2.2.2 Ways of defining quality

There are many definitions of quality in the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary, 1976). The one that seems to get closest to what is meant by quality in higher education, suggests a comparison with others of the same kind. In other words, quality is often a relative concept. This leads to the issue of what is to be used as a comparator. A particular aspect of this, which is of growing importance, is discussed in the chapter on benchmarking (chapter 3).

A characteristic of a concept such as, and perhaps especially, quality, is that its definition depends upon the perspective of the definer. This means that even in the same broad area - such as higher education - there will be a variety of possibilities sometimes conflicting with each other. In view of this complexity, one view is that it is a waste of time trying to define quality, given that it will vary so widely with the focus of interest. As it is never a unitary concept, there is always a range of qualities, (Vroijenstijn, 1991). Pounder (1999) even claims that quality is impossible to define at all precisely.

A number of authors (*e.g.* Middlehurst, 1992; Harvey & Green, 1993; Cheng & Tam, 1997) have attempted to articulate the idea of multiple definitions, resulting in a varying number of definitions in each case. The common thread linking these approaches is that it is not possible to produce a single meaningful definition even, or maybe especially, in the limited context of higher education.

For example, four separate definitions of quality that can be related to education are identified by Middlehurst, (1992). These are i) "*a defining characteristic"*, ii) "*a grade of achievement"* compared to others, iii) "*a particularly high level of performance or achievement"* which sets a standard and iv) "*fitness for purpose*". She says that the variations in her definitions are due to differing perspectives from various individuals or groups, and hence from the differing value systems they use to evaluate quality. She also argues that mixed usage of these leads to confusion, thus suggesting that there is real conceptual variation involved. Consequently, there is no absolute basis for the evaluation. She further underlines the point that none of the definitions are absolute, they all rely on value judgements. These values could vary considerably, depending upon the perspective of the person or group carrying out the evaluation. However, Lomas (2002) suggests that only a very limited number of these definitions are applicable. When discussing the five definitions proposed by Harvey & Green (1993), he suggests that only *"fitness for purpose"* and *"transformation"* are relevant. Furthermore, transformation has proved difficult to apply.

There has been a shift in emphasis, from evaluation coming from inside the system, to much more stress on satisfying external criteria (Harvey, 1996). This shift has highlighted many of the differences in what is meant by quality by the different stakeholders. This has also been an issue highlighted by Greensted & Slack (1998), when they point out that difficulties are likely to be experienced with objects that overlap. They ask if it is possible

for the same quality standards to be applied to apparently similar topics or subjects, when they are being approached from completely differing perspectives.

This approach coincides with that of Harvey, Burrows & Green (1992a). They take the notion a stage further by suggesting that the perspectives of the various groups are such a key determinant that they should form part of the definition used for a particular evaluation. As part of the *"Quality in Higher Education Project"* they compiled a list of five ways in which quality is defined and used in an educational context. They suggest what they describe as a framework, five definitions which each have a conceptual base: *"Quality can be viewed as exceptional, as perfection (or consistency), as fitness for purpose, as value for money or transformative."* (Harvey, Burrows & Green , 1992a, page 4), and go on to provide examples of each usage. In fact, each group may itself include a variety of views. For example, Harvey & Green (1994), claim that employers' views are heterogeneous within an organisation, dependent upon the level of the individual in the organisation. This adds further layers to the variety of views.

In an attempt to illustrate and understand the complexities of what quality means in the educational context, Cheng and Tam (1997) identified seven models of educational quality. They suggest that each model has a different conceptual base, and is appropriate for a different purpose. These are: i) achieving specification ii) achieving resources iii) the process working well iv) satisfying of constituencies v) achievement of the institutions vi) absence of problems vii) organisational learning. Consequently, each model has different indicators, which may be used to evaluate to what extent quality has been achieved. This approach highlights the difficulty of trying to define quality in education. Cheng and Tam suggest a complex all embracing definition of education quality:

"Education quality is the character of the set of elements in the input, process and output of the education system that provides services that completely satisfy both internal and external strategic constituencies by meeting their explicit and implicit expectations" (Cheng & Tam, 1997, page 23).

Whether this actually contributes to defining quality must be doubtful, but it does illustrate the problem of doing so.

2.2.3 A basis for the definition of quality

Despite the claims of conceptual variety made by several of the authors discussed above, it does seem that it is possible to consider most of the proposed definitions as having a common conceptual basis. With the exception of the Middlehurst's definition of *"a characteristic"* (Middlehurst, 1992 p.21), they seem to depend more upon the varying purposes for which the quality assessment is being used. Rather than being based upon any fundamental conceptual difference, they all seem to have comparison relative to something in common.

For example, although Harvey has five definitions, they are all concerned with comparison. The criteria used for comparative purposes can be considered the key elements. These criteria can therefore be aligned to the purpose for which they are being used, and it is these that need scrutiny with regard to their suitability. There are clearly differences in priorities and emphases. These result from the differing perspectives and value systems of what Cheng & Tam (1997) call constituencies, (which appear synonymous with the more usual term of stakeholders). Despite this, whether whatever is being considered meets requirements, appears to be the overarching concept.

Thus, the all-embracing term *"fitness for purpose"*, used by Ball (1985) as his definition of quality, seems to connect with much writing on the subject. The fitness for purpose definition is sometimes coupled with the total quality management (TQM) approaches discussed in section 2.5. These are widely used in industry, linked to the notion of the purpose being the satisfying of customer needs.

Some authors have sought to claim that this customer driven approach is appropriate, or even necessary, in higher education (Muller & Funnell, 1993). They make the assertion that the learner has an important part to play in defining and evaluating quality. In fact, they suggest five *"defining criteria"* which are focussed on the learner. These do not seem particularly helpful in quality evaluation, except in the sense that a good quality course would engender the noted qualities in the learner. This approach reflects the TQM stance taken by the authors, with all its limitations, as discussed in section 2.5. This approach assumes that the key, indeed only, significant stakeholder is the learner. As they are specifically writing about vocational education, this begs the question about the role of *e.g.* employers. It also apparently reduces the role of the academic staff to that of fulfilling student needs. The definition of quality used would therefore be couched in terms of this student perspective.

This contrasts sharply with Imrie (1998), who suggests that the academic staff must be in agreement with any quality policies. If this is not the case they will not apply them carefully, and reduced quality will result. The fundamental flaw in the student as customer approach, is the fact that the student does not, in the final analysis, determine whether the service or product has been satisfactorily provided. The academics (*i.e.* the providers) assess the transformation which has been achieved via assessments, gradings *etc.*. They may also interrupt the provision of the service by failing the student before the completion of the course.

However, it is possible to detach the idea of fitness for purpose from the entirely customer driven approach of TQM, and thus acknowledge a variety of perspectives within this single definition. The apparently all-embracing nature of fitness for purpose, has led to widespread use by various agencies challenged by the complexities of trying to provide a working definition (Stubbs, 1994). It is useful shorthand, which implicitly highlights the variable nature of quality. It helps to move on the debate, from the idea that everyone wants the same thing *i.e.* good quality, to a recognition of possible, or probable, variety which is dependent on other factors. Using "fitness for purpose" acknowledges this variation.

Nevertheless, it does little to solve the fundamental dilemma of determining the appropriate purpose, as it comes back to the issue of the perspective of the definer in the form of the question "whose purpose?" and the ancillary determinant "*fitness of purpose*". In fact, as suggested by Frazer (1994), fitness *of* purpose is just as, if not more, important. There may be a variety of evaluations, depending upon which purpose is being discussed, and who is taking part in the discussion.

This is a similar idea to that used by Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) as indicated by Stubbs (1994). He reports that there was agreement within the Council that one single definition was not possible. Rather, that the judgement should be based on whether the purpose(s) had been achieved, noting that higher education has a number of purposes. The Council went on to define some *"underlying principles"* and *"necessary conditions*", for establishing whether good quality teaching was taking place (Stubbs, 1994). Similarly, Jackson (2001) suggests that quality may be defined in terms of inputs, process and outputs indicating a variety of possible comparators.

2.2.4 Problems with fitness for purpose

Various authors have questioned the usefulness of the fitness for purpose definition. Brennan, Goedegebuuve, Shah, Westerheijden & Weusthol (1992) agree that a single definition of quality is not possible, and quote Pirsig and his dilemma (1974), as epitomising the problem. They suggest that although "fitness for purpose" does seem to offer a solution, it leads to the fact that each viewpoint produces a different purpose. This in turn means that there as many possibilities as there are stakeholders, multiplied by as many purposes as they care to distinguish. Although this does not move the debate very far towards a definition, it does highlight the complexity of quality and its definition. They distinguish between trying to assess the quality of the output (*i.e.* the graduates), and the quality of the process. Although it is ultimately the quality of the graduate that is probably more important, it is usually the process that is assessed. This is confirmed by Yorke (1992) when discussing the concept of quality and the difficulties in defining it. He links this issue to the variations in what various institutions claim as criteria of quality. Radford (1997), agrees that there are several definitions of quality in the educational context, and that what is used is probably an amalgam of these. He suggests another problem for the "fitness of purpose" approach. He points out that as each institution determines its own purposes, it is not possible to use the relative achievement of these as a comparator.

De Weert (1990) suggests that using a term like fitness for purpose may itself be unhelpful as it seems to condense the definition of quality into a single idea rather than recognise this *"multi-dimensional aspect"*. Pring (1992) takes a similar view to de Weert in some ways, as he claims that it is not possible to define quality. He further asserts that any attempt to produce an unambiguous operational definition, is bound to fail to encapsulate the meaning. He further derides "fitness for purpose" for reducing the

assessment of quality to a narrow range of criteria, which omit much of the concept of quality.

Furthermore, the purpose of an higher education institution may be uncertain or controversial and will almost certainly be multiple (Moodie, 1986, quoting Elton, 1986). Indeed institutional purposes are either too vague and general, or controversially specific. By way of illustration, he reminds us that an old definition used, (in 1925) by the University Grants Committee, was that the purpose of a university was to achieve educational quality.

Middlehurst & Gordon (1995) claim that fitness for purpose has been problematical in higher education, because of this variation in what is considered the purpose. Additionally, there may be no way of determining how far a purpose is in fact being furthered. Elton (1986) suggests, that although it appears that using the definition fitness for purpose resolves the dilemma, in fact it merely presents the alternative difficulty of limiting all notions of quality to those for which a purpose can be specified. Moreover, an agreed method of judging the extent of purpose fulfilment must also be generated. A further issue raised by this approach is whether the purpose is appropriate *i.e.* fitness of purpose. Who determines the purpose may therefore be critical. For example, Moodie (1986) noted a problem with the Government purposes for higher education which consist of balancing quality, opportunity and cost. He suggests that these contrast with the claim of the universities to be pursuing academic excellence.

The tension between academics and the external controllers and funders of higher education, has probably always existed. Moodie (1986) suggests that it is inevitable and that academics should be prepared to argue their case, and to inform politicians in an effort to get what they want. Thus a large volume of students, taught at a low cost,

with greater efficiency in the use of resources such as staff *etc.*, have become strategic aims of universities. This contrasts with Ramsden's (1986) perhaps simplistic view that the fitness for purpose of higher education should be judged by the students' quality of learning. Leading on from the debate about what is meant by quality, is the issue of which criteria might be used to assess quality, and how they can be established.

2.3 Establishment of quality criteria

This section discusses some of the issues concerning the establishment of criteria used for assessing quality in higher education institutions. How criteria are chosen, their form, and the purposes to which they are put, are considered.

2.3.1 Introduction to quality criteria

In order to move towards some sort of evaluation of quality, it is necessary to try to find suitable indicators. These can then be used in quality evaluation to stand in for quality itself. From the discussion on the definition of what is meant by quality in sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, it is clear that the establishment of a set of criteria is not a straightforward process. It may be appropriate to have a number of sets of criteria to serve different purposes. However, that does beg the critical question of which set will be regarded as the most influential, for example for the allocation of public funds.

2.3.2 Issues in specifying quality criteria

In a sense, the argument about what is meant by quality comes to a head, when the specific measures used to evaluate it are articulated. These are inextricably linked with the definition used, and will similarly vary with the perspective of the interest group involved (and with each individual). The criteria chosen for any quality assessment are of critical importance. De Weert (1990) stresses the need to establish appropriate criteria, and to do so in context. Externally applied ones are at best inappropriate, and at worst lead to a reduction in quality, by emphasising the wrong things.

The application of one of set of criteria over another, can have a profound affect on the outcome of the assessment. For example, it could be argued that the Government, as stakeholder, has its own purposes for education. These may conflict with academic quality, as it looks for a balance between quality and cost (Moodie, 1986). Newton (2000) suggest that a consequence is that quality assessment is generally superficial. It concentrates on things other than the real quality of the educative process.

However, if appropriate criteria can be established, it may be possible to use them to evaluate and compare quality. A concern is that by trying to encompass the variety of perspectives, and thus making it acceptable to all stakeholders, an excessive number of criteria will be employed. This would make it cumbersome and expensive to carry out. This would also mean that in any summative evaluation, each component would have a small impact. Middlehurst & Woodhouse (1995) argue that a balance of stakeholder interests is required to achieve a fair system, which will accommodate the various perspectives. This view is endorsed by Nagel & Kvernbekk (1997), who maintain that a comprehensive and holistic view is essential, if an adequate assessment of quality is required.

Another major flaw in this approach, is that there will be areas where differing perspectives produce contrary views that are irreconcilable. For example, Harvey & Green (1994) suggest that employer satisfaction should be one of a number of key indicators of quality for higher education courses. In contrast, Barrett (1998) argues that as seats of learning, universities are the wrong place for vocational courses, She suggests that by definition they should not be awarded degree status. Concomitant with this appears to be the view, that employers should not be stakeholders in higher education. Clearly, these views are diametrically opposed. It is difficult to gauge the relative strength of the views in universities. It is certainly true to say, that within a multi-disciplinary department such as hospitality management, there are differing academic traditions. In particular, the view taken of vocationally orientated skills, is a cause of considerable tension.

2.3.3 Specified programme and learning outcomes

The basic assumption underlying the use of programme outcomes is that it is possible to specify what will happen to students who follow a particular programme (Ellis, 2000). A number of stakeholders may have some interest in such statements. However, the programme specifications have been developed in the context of providing a basis for evaluation of the programmes by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (Ellis, 2000). In fact, the QAA has suggested that they are essential for this function (Quality Assurance Agency, 1999).

The purposes a course, department *etc.* has determined for itself is a common basis for criteria, and it has proved useful as far as official bodies are concerned. This approach has been used by the Polytechnic and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC), (Stubbs, 1994) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (Higher

Education Funding Council for England, 1995). The QAA subject review process also relied heavily on this approach (Quality Assurance Agency, 2000b). Over recent years, the related term "learning outcomes" has been used to describe predetermined objectives from the perspective of the students, the outcomes are specified in terms of competences. This is related to the performance indicators discussed later. It was a key recommendation of the Dearing report (Armstrong, 1999) and has become implicit and explicit in institutional evaluation (Quality Assurance Agency, 2000b). Bates (1997) sees this as part of the drive for greater accountability (see section 2.4.2), and claims that competence based education is actually about exerting more control.

Jackson (2000a) is supportive of the learning outcomes approach. However, his statement that most curriculum routes can be defined in these terms implies the intriguing suggestion that some cannot. These predetermined outcomes must be demonstrated and measured. This implies that if it is not measurable then it not considered, despite the fact that some key skills may be very difficult, if not impossible, to measure.

This approach is criticised by Pring (1992). He claims that specifying purposes as a means of determining quality reduces the assessment to a narrow range of criteria, which omit much of the concept of quality. This corresponds to Elton's (1986) position, that using purposes as criteria, limits all notions of quality to those for which a purpose can be specified.

As noted when discussing measurement criteria (section 2.4.3) and the discussion of pilot benchmarks (section 3.5.2), a significant problem is what level of outcome is being specified – threshold, modal, ideal *etc.*. Another linked issue is what level of detail is appropriate. Jackson, Parks, Harrison & Stebbings (2000) suggest general

"intellectual outcomes", but it is difficult to see how these could be used for quality assessment. Indeed, general outcomes do not differ substantially from one programme to another. Thus, they could provide neither a basis for evaluation (*e.g.* by the QAA); nor for comparison (*e.g.* by a prospective student). A more detailed approach would invite criticism. Nevertheless, there is no obvious reason why it should not be done, unless it is because it highlights some immeasurable aspects. It would seem to fulfil both purposes noted earlier much more successfully than the general approach advocated by Jackson, Parks, Harrison & Stebbings (2000).

Multidisciplinary courses have particular difficulties with detailed programme specifications. They fall into two main types:

a) combined or joint honours where elements from two or more subjects areas are studied by the students (Ellis, 2000).

b) single honours which embrace a range of disciplines within the same programme.

Vocational degrees containing management aspects, including hospitality management, would come into the second category. It is inevitable that such programmes have to sacrifice some depth, in order to accommodate the extra breadth required, compared to more narrowly focussed single subject degrees. A detailed programme specification would highlight the limitations of the broader degree in this respect. A further difficulty is experienced when student choice is permitted. This may cause a problem with specific outcomes, if a choice of modules is permitted from other parts of the university.

The limitations of the specified programme outcomes approach is underscored by Yorke (1996a). He explored the variation in what were used as quality criteria. He used data from a study carried out by the Council for National Academic Awards. He

found that the predominate categories of a quality justification given, were not connected to the course and its delivery directly. Categories most often used included: student numbers; research rating; employment records; and industry links. Most of these have firmed up in the last few years as "performance indicators", and therefore as quality criteria, or at least as substitutes for them.

2.3.4 Performance indicators

When discussing the use of performance indicators (PIs) for institutional evaluation, Nagel & Kavernbekk, (1997) suggest that, despite the fact that PIs appear to be objective they have little connection with educational quality. They are more a reflection of political and societal values. These authors claim that it is not possible to articulate explicitly at least some aspects of quality and what is needed is an "*holistic and contextual*" evaluation.

Taylor (2001), speaking from an Australian perspective, has similar objections. She says that PIs have emerged internationally to *"manage and assess higher education"*. They are supposed to improve aspects of the system, but they may have dysfunctional affects, especially in setting criteria. The PIs used do not capture the full essence of higher education. This is exaggerated by reducing the PIs to a number, to facilitate cross institution comparisons. Academics focus on these instead of *"functional goals"*. Thus may lead to manipulation of individuals and figures to improve the PI, even if there is no real improvement Taylor (2001*)*. Morley (2001) is also critical of PIs as they imply objective measurement, whereas the measures have a subjective basis.

Moreover, PIs can measure only what is measurable. This may leave more subtle, and arguably more important, quality aspects, not only unassessed, but also unaddressed by the institutions. As these will not be subject to outside scrutiny, they are considered

less important (Lindsay, 1993). In the same vein, Holmes (1993) claims that the use of mechanistic systems of PIs will not ensure quality. Williams (1986) and Ramsden (1986) went further by suggesting that PIs may actually reduce standards, by focussing on measurable but less important areas.

Lindsay (1993) claims that PIs can only be used to judge the effectiveness and efficiency of performance if three conditions are met. In summary, these are i) that the inputs and outputs can be measured; ii) decision makers must be in control of all the processes; iii) decision makers must intend to maximise outputs from the minimum inputs. He contends that these conditions are not met in higher education, and that the use of PIs is based on an erroneously simplistic view of education as an input-output model. They are presented as measures of quality, when in fact they are substitutes for it. They cannot encompass many of the key dimensions of both teaching and research, and therefore the intangible and arguably more important elements are neglected (Lindsay, 1993). However, he goes on to admit that the intangibles are not measurable, and so seems to be saying that quality assessment criteria cannot be established in this area.

Knight's (2002) view on the assessment of students learning supports this position. He claims that consistency is not possible, and therefore does not generate satisfactory PIs. Vroejinstein (1994) suggests that a problem with PIs is that governments want summative measures, whereas formative measures are more appropriate for universities. However, in what seems a minority view, Rowley (1996) argues that because of the problems of evaluating quality, PIs can serve a useful role in helping to achieve this.

The choice of criteria for assessing departments or institutions can have a very significant affect. This is especially, but not exclusively, the case when these are set externally *e.g.* by a Government agency. The "league tables" produced by various newspapers, as discussed later, are other possible influential examples. The participants may alter their behaviour to meet the criteria, if that objective becomes more important than meeting the criteria they would themselves have chosen (Trow 1994; de Weert 1990).

2.3.5 Quality criteria for students

The term performance indicators can also be employed at the level of individual student. Its use in this context poses similar problems of establishment and assessment as that discussed above for institutions.

The apparent demise of the Graduate Standards Project (GSP) (Higher Education Quality Council, 1997), has confirmed the problems associated with the setting general criteria for the evaluation of individuals, in an educational context. The GSP set out to explore the extent to which it was possible to establish general benchmarks for the evaluation of graduates. This was done by looking at the issue of what abilities students should have achieved by the end of a programme. The original intention of the programme was to determine a generic set of attributes that any graduate should possess. It was concluded that these attributes need to be developed within a specific domain. However, the variety of domains is so large - individuals, institutions, particular programmes as well as a subject specificity - that it calls into question whether a graduateness specification can be anything other than vague generalities. The end of the project seems to confirm this.

The assessment of such a set of attributes would be impossible in any formal objective way. In fact, the GSP seemed to tacitly acknowledge that student assessment would

continue as value judgements by professional academics. The report noted with concern, the lack of inculcation of shared values and assessment culture in the newer staff.

The work on the programme had suggested that it might be possible to make some progress, within restricted subject areas. Greater difficulties arose with multi-disciplinary courses, and probably insuperable ones with any general view of graduateness except in the most vague terms. To take an obvious and extreme example: it is difficult to imagine an appropriate threshold for numeracy, which could meaningfully embrace both a graduate in mathematics and one in history. If fundamentally different standards are suggested for different named degrees types or cognate areas, it does call into question the entire notion of "graduateness". We are probably reduced to something similar to the vague generalisations of previous generations (Silver & Silver 1986).

The conclusion of the GSP that the graduate attributes should be domain centred, did also underscore the view that quality, at least in the field of education, is a concept strongly dependent upon the context in which it is being discussed. This suggests that in order for it to be evaluated, a grasp of the contextual issues will be required. Thus any criteria, which get down to the level of the students, will have to be context driven.

A consequence of this is that externally derived criteria, external that is to the course or department, are bound to be very general and not to be focussed on the capabilities of the students. This view was endorsed by subject benchmarks discussed in section 3.5, where even within a limited range of subjects, much of the specificity was low. This highlights an issue that has been identified by Strathern (1997). As student performance is the major output of universities as organisations, it might be thought that some evaluation of student performance would figure in a quality audit. In fact this is generally not the case. This is not because it is not relevant or important, but rather because it is difficult to determine

student performance in any general way. As it is easier to set criteria, it is the organisation of the institution that is scrutinised.

The subject/discipline related skills are an area of controversy within hospitality management. The issue was given greater prominence, by the inclusion of other vocational areas in the same subject benchmarking group, as discussed in section 3.6. However, in even in the much more restricted sense than implied by this grouping, in hospitality management degree programmes, there is particular tension with regard to whether practical/vocational skills are appropriate for degree courses.

This conflict is not restricted to hospitality management. A similar concern exists over both nurse training and teacher training, and how much of the course should be on-the-job. In an extreme view, Barrett (1998) questions whether universities are the appropriate place for such vocational courses to be carried out. Also in the domain of paramedical courses, Hammick (1996) points the tensions that exist between academics and practitioners when validating degree courses.

Therefore, the tension also seems to exist in vocational areas other than hospitality management, where graduates will be required to perform operational tasks as soon as they have graduated. There is an expectation amongst their employers that they should be competent to do so. One strategy for reducing the tension, which is usually employed on hospitality management courses, is to restrict the acquisition and practice of the operational skills to the earlier years of the course. The final year can then be kept as an "academic" year. In contrast, Ellington (1999) suggests continuing development in the practical area, in fact operating as a full practitioner in this year.

Vocational education is considered more fully in chapter 4.

2.3.6 League tables

A completely different view of quality, and what criteria might be used to measure it, has developed as a result of greater participation in higher education, and consequential media interest. A number of national newspapers produce lists, which purport to give information concerning the relative quality of universities. In order to produce a "league table" from best to worst, a variety of criteria are used, combined together to give an overall score for each university. The way in which this is done seems to be changed periodically for the various tables.

The Times Good University Guide is arguably the best known, and probably the most used of the league tables. For the 1998 guide, nine separate measures were weighted and totalled. The measures were all based on published data and were all easily measurable (O'Leary, 1998). Thus the table is produced by conflating a number of arbitrary unrelated measures, with an arbitrary weighting. That this is highly unlikely to say anything of any value concerning the quality of each institution, does not alter the fact that there may be some influence exerted by this exercise.

The choice of criteria is interesting. It presumably reflects what O'Leary thinks potential students regard as important. It does call into question whether notice should be taken of these measures, with their possible distorting effect. This mirrors the possible distortion caused by Government or other official agencies criteria as discussed above.

Yorke (1997a) carried out a detailed critique of an earlier version of *The Times* league table, and concluded that it was an invalid way of comparing universities. This was despite a number of modifications that had been made compared to previous years. According to *The Times* (O'Leary, 1998), 11% of university applicants use league

tables to help with their choice and this can almost certainly be increased by the fact that schools and parents, who help the choice of a further 57%, will also refer to them to some extent. Flying somewhat in the face of this, Pounder (1999) maintains that including quality is inappropriate when comparing universities. He contends that as a meaningful definition is not possible, measuring it is bound to be inconsistent. More recently, Knight (2002) has claimed that QAA subject reviews are inappropriate for use with monitoring systems, and by extension league tables. These require reliable and valid performance indicators

2.4 The measurement of quality

This section begins by discussing briefly the purpose of quality measurement in higher education, and then examines the issues surrounding the use of quality criteria in assessing higher education courses.

2.4.1 Introduction to quality measurement

Quality measurement follows on from the determination of the criteria to be used. Some commentators have suggested that the process of quality assurance, quality assessment or quality control can exert influence on the overall system. This follows if the agencies, involved in the quality assessment or quality control, choose their criteria on the basis of what is measurable, quantifiable, easily comparable *etc*., rather than on the basis of what is considered most important by other participants (Thompson 1992; Trow 1994). Other commentators are critical of this elitist view. They suggest that it is possible to have a quality assessment system which measures but not distorts, and that this is necessary (Clark, 1994). Finch (1994) claims that quality and measurement are *"inextricably linked"*. Freed, Kingman & Fife (1997) take an even more extreme view. They link the definition of quality with its measurement. Whilst noting the difficulties in arriving at a

definition, they claim that this is essential for measurement to take place. The central importance that this has in their view, is emphasised by their claim that quality can only be achieved if it is measured. Some of the issues concerned with the application of quality criteria are discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 Purposes of quality measurement

There appear to be two main purposes for undertaking a quality evaluation. One is to provide reassurance to the various stakeholders that the quality of the provision is satisfactory *i.e.* accountability; the other is to provide a mechanism to help with quality enhancement.

Some authors have seen a conflict between these two functions. For example, Vroeijenstijn (1995) postulates that there is an inbuilt tension between procedures that encourage quality improvement, and those that provide accountability. He sees the two functions as basically incompatible, invoking the classical allusion of Scylla (improvement) and Charybdis (accountability) to illustrate the point. Jackson (1997) also sees a tension between the two functions. In a critique of the new (at the time of writing) quality assurance system to be used, Harvey (1996) writing in the Times Higher Education Supplement, makes the rather sweeping claim that *"the accountability-led quality game has a limited life"*.

Other authors have presented a more positive view. For example, Randall (2002) makes it clear that he thinks that quality assurance is necessary, to give confidence to the users that the required standards are being met. Yorke (1996), in replying to Vroeijenstijn (1995), has suggested that it is possible to operate a system which moves towards gradual improvement but which can also provide accountability. Thune

(1996) goes further, by suggesting that although it is technically possible to separate improvement and accountability, they can be combined as they are in Denmark.

Jackson (1996) also claims that it is possible to link the two aspects. He has produced a conceptual framework for doing this, which lists accountability activities. He then suggests that where they are embedded in the institution's quality management system, this will enhance quality. This must be questionable given that although institutional processes are important, it is at the programme and unit level that student experience is focussed.

A more abstract but more realistic suggestion, is that the process of self evaluation included in the quality assessment, can be a key part of quality enhancement. The introspection necessary for this process is itself helpful in promoting a culture of quality awareness, and providing impetus towards quality improvement (Frazer, 1994).

2.4.3 Criticism of methods of measurement

Although is not difficult to find fault with the various mechanisms and procedures, satisfactory alternatives are not easy to find. For example, Elton's (1986) solution is for the profession (*i.e.* higher education academics) to police itself. This has some connections with Yorke's (1997b) view. He suggests that some variant of the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach may be possible; although the idea of *"optimal, rather than total, quality"* may be more appropriate. TQM is discussed in section 2.5.

In his 1999 article, Yorke suggests a move away from the emphasis that the current systems have on the existing problems (Yorke, 1999). It may be preferable to move to a position where, if the provision is deemed to be satisfactory, then the emphasis should move to enhancement. Harvey's suggestion, following from his condemnation

of the accountability culture noted in section 2.4.2, is that internal quality reviews designed to encourage quality improvement would be a better, more sustainable method (Harvey, 1996). However, this does seem to be already embedded in the process through the self-evaluation process.

Although it is difficult to disagree with the notion of improving quality, it is also difficult to see how enhancement can be achieved, without determining what needs enhancing. Any quality evaluation must surely look at what is currently being provided.

Gore, Bond & Steven (2000) suggest two paradigms for quality enhancement a) "*technical-rational"*; and b) *"professional-artistry*". The technical-rational culture has become predominant. This requires measurable factors. It only permits innovation if it fits in within the existing framework, and is measurable. In contrast, the professional-artistry paradigm allows for change. Consequently, for quality enhancement, the professional-artistry culture is more appropriate as you cannot predict everything. This duality of approaches is also noted by Knight & Trowler (2000). They use the terms Type I and Type II respectively, to describe the same types noted above by Gore, Bond & Steven (2000). They agree that type I is the usual type prevailing in the UK, and is satisfactory for some maintenance functions. However, type II is required for change

The criteria used need to reflect the dual purposes of accountability and improvement. It is the application of explicit criteria, which highlights the differing perspectives of the various stakeholders. Middlehurst (1992) suggests that that there has been a shift in emphasis. This has meant that much more prominence has been given to satisfying external criteria. This has emphasised many of the differences in what was meant by

quality by different stakeholders. Lindsay (1993) suggests that this inclusion of performance and its measurement, alongside quality, has added a further layer of complexity. This has been compounded by the variety in the way in which different participants view the various aspects. Strathern (1997) is also critical of what she refers to as the audit culture. What is audited has to be auditable, and the generation of more and more information gets in the way of more important activities relating to quality.

The activities of the QAA, and the rise of league tables discussed in section 2.3.6, have added to the importance of the external evaluation over recent years. Most of the criticism seems to relate the previously mentioned point, that if particular criteria are used which have a serious implication, then efforts will be directed towards achieving good ratings for these criteria. This may be to the detriment of other possibly more important issues. For example, Newton (2000) suggests that unless the measurement policy takes account of the academics conditions and context, academics just make sure that the rules appear to be followed without making any real change. However, this could be more an issue of the criteria chosen, than the actual process. It perhaps points out the need for careful examination of the criteria used, and the use to which they are put. Jackson's (1997) solution is to move to a situation where internal quality assurance becomes the predominant process.

Of particular concern therefore, is whether the application of criteria, rather than just providing benchmarks for evaluation, act to modify behaviour once the criteria have been established. There is the significant possibility that these will drive individuals and the organisations. Elton (1986) claims that this actually reduces quality, as by substituting performance indicators for real quality, the latter is diminished.

Lindsay (1993) concurs that measurable outcomes are given a "*quite unjustified importance*" compared to more qualitative judgements, which may provide a better view of the level of quality. A resulting problem is that the participants may adapt their behaviour to meet the criteria, if that objective becomes more important than meeting the criteria they would themselves have chosen (Trow, 1994; de Weert, 1990). This could be of particular importance, if the criteria are set externally, *e.g.* by a government agency, to determine funding arrangements.

An interesting parallel here has been explored by Ramsden (1986). When discussing standards in relation to students' learning, he argues that the way students learn is a crucial aspect of any discussion. He suggests that as the emphasis is on output, students align themselves to the criteria suggested by the assessment mechanism, which often therefore encourages atomistic surface learning. This has particular relevance to the position which is being taken by the QAA, which looks on outcomes as the focus of evaluation (Jackson, 1998). This criticism is particularly relevant with regard to performance indicators, which by their nature tend to focus on the quantitative aspects of the process (or at least on the quantifiable).

Although most criticism is directed towards external agencies and their application of quality criteria, some authors are critical of the way in which quality assurance has been adopted. For example, Holmes (1993) complains of the use of what he describes as the managerial approach, with heavy emphasis on the mechanisms of quality control, but not engaging the participants. He draws a distinction between striving to achieve quality, and striving to test for and demonstrate it. Newton (2000) also points out the problems of trying to assess quality, without engaging academic staff in the process. He claims that they become adept at paying lip service to the quality accountability procedures. He further claims that much of the current system is a

question of managing the process, and that a higher quality rating can be achieved by better management, without necessarily improving the quality.

The issue is discussed by Jackson (1996). He suggests that the auditors need a shared understanding with others involved. This is to ensure consistent professional judgements, and to ensure that the data is properly interpreted. He provides what he claims is a *"combined conceptual framework"* linking accountability and enhancement (Jackson, 1996). However, this seems to take enhancement away from the course level where accountability occurs; to the institutional level where enhancement occurs (Jackson, 1996). This must be highly questionable, given that much enhancement must take place at the point of delivery of the courses.

Jackson (1998) claims that a major criticism of the use of quality assessments - too much detail leading to too much assessment, and thus the assessment becoming the main driving force - has been overcome in the UK. In New Zealand and South Africa where it has caused major problems, the focus was on separate units of the course. In the UK, the overall qualification rather than its components has been used. However, the growth in modular courses noted by Jackson (1998), coupled with the fact that often these modules may be taken from different departments, faculties and even universities suggest that this is an act of faith that will be difficult to sustain.. An holistic approach to programmes or qualifications is very difficult to maintain, given the fragmentation of modular courses mentioned earlier. It fact, it is simply not attainable in a verifiable way, unless the academics, including the external examiners, are trusted to "know what is required". This brings us to a "secret garden" that only a privileged few are able to share. Academic staff have to be trusted to recognise the appropriate quality, as no evidence is available that can be verified. This is highly unlikely to be acceptable politically. As a result, in order to determine that quality

standards are achieved, they have to be assessed, and consequently criteria will have to be specified in assessable form. This applies at the student and at the programme/department/university level. If not, external scrutiny will not be possible at least not in any form that is acceptable outside the system.

2.5 Total Quality Management and its place in higher education

This section examines the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) and its applicability to higher education. TQM is a quality related philosophy which has moved from its origins in manufacturing to the service sector of industry and thence to education. TQM grew, at least in Western countries, out of the work of Deming (Deming, 1986). This was the basis of the philosophy which was used to make Japanese industry so successful after World War 2. From this philosophy Deming derived a system of management, which became central to the concept of TQM.

TQM has been defined in a number of ways which are usually rather vague and so general as to be uncontentious.

Chaffee & Sherr (1992,) use a typically vague definition:

> *"TQM is a comprehensive philosophy of living and working in organisations, emphasising the relentless pursuit of continuous improvement."* (page 3).

The definitions are then usually further delineated by reference to a series of principles. For example, Chaffee & Sherr (1992) have produced a set of three broad ideas, which they claim capture the essence of TQM:

1) defining quality in terms of the needs of the people and groups that the organisation serves;

2) improving an organisation's work performance or technical system;

3) improving the administrative system.

However, most authors have produced longer lists. For example, Ho & Wearn (1996) cite these as: leadership, commitment, total customer satisfaction, continuous improvement, total involvement, training and education, ownership of problems, reward and recognition, error prevention and team work.

There is a body of literature advocating the application of TQM to higher education (*e.g.* Lewis & Smith, 1994). However, few authors explore any conceptual base to TQM, although sometimes an apology or justification is made for not doing so. There seems to be a general assumption in the advocating literature that TQM is self evidently a "good thing". Some authors even suggest it to be essential for the survival of the organisation (Muller & Funnell, 1993; Sutcliffe & Pollock, 1992). However, Holloway claims that TQM literature is weak on theory and concepts, and there are many problems with extending its use to higher education (Holloway, 1994). Tait (1993) agrees, claiming that using the industrial model of TQM, carries with it the danger of removing some of the essence of higher education. Barrett (1996) is even more pointed in his criticism (see later).

Brennan (1996) suggests that the extending of TQM to higher education results from trying to combine quite different perspectives. These derive from assumptions about academic standards on the one hand, and contemporary quality management on the other. He implies that the latter is more appropriately applied to service standards such as library books, rather than the standard of education *per se*. Lawrence and McCollough (2001), whilst advocating the use of TQM within the classroom, admit that it is usually restricted to administrative functions. Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2002) also point out that TQM has

been mainly restricted to service aspects of higher education. They suggest that two different models are required for the two aspects of academic and support services. Nevertheless, they do also suggest that these could come together in an holistic model. They suggest this in view of the areas of commonality, such as focussing on students and requiring commitment from higher management.

The logic which suggests the use of TQM in higher education, seems to be along the lines of: a) TQM has been successful in commercial service industries; b) education is providing a service; therefore c) TQM will be successful in education (Idrus, 1996).

Ho and Wearn (1996) claim that:

"Because TQM is universal and proven by many successful firms it should be used to formulate the mission statement for the services provided by higher education institutions" (page 35).

Their justification for this also includes the point that by not practising what they are preaching, universities lose credibility (Ho & Wearn, 1996). Their assumption in taking this position seems to be, that higher education is like any other service industry.

This is a major assumption that has been challenged by a number of authors (*e.g.* Barrett, 1996). Holloway (1994) claims that TQM is not applicable to higher education. Holmes (1993) also voices doubts about the applicability of TQM to higher education. However, Moon & Geall (1996) suggest that the debate has moved on from a for:against TQM argument, to a more gradual process of continuous quality improvement. This view has been supported more recently by Roffe (1998), who suggests that *"continuous quality improvement"* is more appropriate, even though differing perspectives make it difficult to apply.

Harvey (1995) takes the line, that whilst TQM as it stands cannot be applied to higher education, there are elements which could be used. This selective approach is consistent with the findings of Winchip (1996). This limited application was also suggested by Aly & Akpovi (2001). When reporting on a survey of Californian public universities, they noted that TQM use is limited and largely restricted to administrative areas.

There seem to be two main difficulties concerning the application of TQM to higher education. Firstly, TQM is strongly orientated towards the customer. Secondly, fundamental cultural change throughout every aspect of the organisation is an essential part of its implementation.

TQM's orientation towards the customer, seems to raise a number of problematic issues as far as education is concerned. Many authors advocating the TQM approach take the position, that the customer is the student and that their needs, wants *etc*. should drive the quality system (Hill, 1995; Idrus, 1996). Sometimes the word consumer is used instead of customer, but it appears in this context to be synonymous. There are many difficulties with this somewhat simplistic approach, which ignores several key factors:

1) There are other stakeholders who could have a claim to be customers of higher education *e.g.* the Government (or society at large), employers of graduates. Even Elliott (1993), who supports TQM and the customer approach, admits that there are many groups that can be viewed as customers of higher education. Inevitably, these groups have differing perspectives, and may have different needs to be satisfied by the higher education system. This suggests that any attempt to pursue a customer-driven approach, similar to that which might be employed by a commercial organisation, is bound to encounter serious problems. This may be particularly the case when considering vocational courses. These have as an important perspective, the notion of employer as customer of the student-product. If the characteristics the employers demand from this

student as product, do not match the result of the student as customer influence on courses, then problems are inevitable.

2) The students are not free agents entitled to make whatever use they wish of the service. In most of the UK higher education system they are accepted, or rejected , using a variety of often ill-defined criteria. Constraints are placed on them in their use of the service; and crucially, they can be prevented (by failing) from continuing to use the service (Tait, 1993). Another key issue is that students are not able to determine all their needs as customers. For example, academic staff, taking into account the objectives of the course and the requirements of other stakeholders, usually decide on the subject matter.

3) Most UK students are only paying for part of their education. Several other sources contribute to the cost, and can therefore claim to have some concern with what is being taught, and how this is being done.

4) It is also the case that students are not best placed to evaluate some aspects of their education, *e.g.* the subject matter, until the course is completed (Richardson, 1998).

Barrett (1996) suggests that there is a basic philosophical incompatibility with the notion that student wants should drive education. A fundamental objective of higher education is to influence perceptions, attitudes *etc.*. This suggests that by definition the student will modify their views during and as a result of the educative process. This in turn implies that asking students to predetermine what they are to be taught is a logical nonsense. Barrett (1996) presents anecdotes which he claims demonstrate that students' inclinations and wants are, sometimes at least, not directed towards the educational quality of the course. Moon and Geall (1996) may be right in saying that Barrett's evidence is weak, and composed of *ad hominem* attacks. However, there must remain a conundrum embedded in

allowing students to determine their future knowledge, before they have the knowledge to make the determination.

Some authors have suggested ways to overcome this dilemma. For example, Tannock & Burge (1992) attempt to partially sidestep the problem. They suggest that although the student is the primary customer, they are naive customers, whose interests must therefore be looked after by the bodies charged with the responsibility of maintaining the quality of higher education. Perhaps a more educationally viable perspective, is that the student is a partner with the lecturer (Elton & Partington, 1993). It may be possible to consider students as being both producers and consumers, perhaps in a reciprocal relationship with lecturers. Students consume the products of the lecturers (lectures *etc.*), whilst the lecturers consume the products of the students (assessments *etc.*).

In a similar vein, Dill (1995) suggests that students should be considered as co-producers in the process rather than the consumers of it. This approach avoids some of the conceptual and logical difficulties noted above, but still does beg the question "Who then *is* the customer?", if the TQM philosophy advanced by most authors is still to be embraced. It would also imply that the students must be encompassed in the cultural change which must be effected if TQM is to be successful, as they would be part of the system producing the delivered service. Lawrence & McCollough (2001) propose a system of guaranteeing specific aspects of the course and its delivery to the students. It would be within the students' competence to judge whether the conditions of the guarantees had been fulfilled. This does seem to fit uneasily with the idea that TQM embraces the whole organisation in a change of culture. Lawrence & McCollough were writing from a U.S.A. perspective, and rather than propose a way forward for the adoption of TQM, this seems to illustrate the impracticality of such an approach. However, it does

serve to focus on the classroom activities as an area where quality is important, and as such contributes to the debate on what should be assessed for quality.

The issue of cultural change poses the other big challenge to TQM implementation in higher education. Writers advocating the introduction of TQM (*e.g.* Idrus, 1996), make considerable play of the fact that its introduction is not so much changing the system, as changing the culture of the higher education institution. Unfortunately for this perspective, higher education institutions are bureaucratic, hierarchical organisations with a heavily top down management style and structure (Dill, 1995). This seems particularly to be the case with the newer universities, where most vocational, and the very large majority of hospitality management students are taught (Holmes, 1993). Certainly large portions of what might be seen as critical quality issues are outside the control of the academic staff.

As result of work done on staff attitudes in higher education, Chaston (1994) concludes that the lack of the necessary trust and cooperation within British universities means that the introduction of TQM would be difficult. Harris (1994) accepts the problems of TQM in higher education already discussed. However, he suggests that if it was adopted it could act to ameliorate the impact of the managerial style mentioned above.

Another cultural issue, that of the nature of intellectual endeavour and academics relationship to it, has been commented on by a number of writers (*e.g.* Trow, 1994). Part of the debate revolves around the claim that academics are by training and inclination concerned with enquiry, debate *etc.*. As a consequence, they are not inclined to accept any dogma, however well motivated, without a searching analysis. They also see themselves, and often are, experts in particular areas of knowledge. This inclines them to reject the suggestion that students without this knowledge should be party to deciding what should be taught.

A further fundamental philosophical point made by some authors, is to question whether the "right first time" principle which is basic to TQM, is appropriate for use in academic contexts. Muller & Funnell (1993) claim that it is incompatible with the exploring, researching *etc.* necessary for academic endeavour. In particular, they suggest that the learner needs to learn from mistakes. Roffe (1998) agrees, suggesting that the individual culture of the researching academic does not lend itself to TQM approaches.

A further cultural complication, is that hospitality management courses are staffed by lecturers from a wide range of disciplines. Each lecturer has a loyalty to his/her discipline, as well as the course/department/university *etc.*. In this context, the notion of a single culture is particularly difficult, as mismatches between what various individuals from different disciplines find acceptable is possible, if not probable.

It is apparent that there is a wide variety of opinion concerning the appropriateness of TQM being applied in higher education. It may be appropriate for administrative aspects but there is considerable dissension concerning its applicability to the academic process.

2.6 Conclusion and summary

The definition of quality in higher education is difficult. The concept of quality is subjective and context driven which makes a single meaningful definition impossible to achieve. The various stakeholders each have their own perspective and therefore definition of quality which adds to the complexity. The use of the notion of quality as "fitness for purpose" goes some way to addressing the issue, but still leaves the problem of determining the appropriate purpose which will similarly vary with perspective of the stakeholder. There is considerable debate concerning the purposes of higher education, and this is particularly pertinent for vocational education as discussed in chapter 4. In

addition, some authors suggest that the minimalist approach implied by defining quality by the purpose ignores other important aspects.

The establishing of agreed criteria and the measuring of achievements against these criteria is equally problematic. There has been greater emphasis on the establishment of criteria in recent years; and the choice of criteria can have a major impact on the nature and content of higher education courses. The use to which the assessment of achievement of the criteria is put can also be influential, and can change the delivery and content of a higher education course. An important issue is whether the choosing of measurable criteria, in favour of arguably more important but less easily measurable ones, distorts what is provided and reduces quality.

One key approach to overcoming some of the difficulties of establishing what is meant by quality, and providing criteria against which to assess it, is known as benchmarking. This process, or at least the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) version of it, has become the "official" way of dealing with the quality debate in the UK. Consequently, it is central to the issue of quality and its assessment in higher education courses. Benchmarking in general, and in particular the QAA approach to it, is discussed in the next chapter.

The next chapter looks at a key approach to this issue – that of benchmarking. This process, or at least the Quality Assurance Agency version of it, has become the "official" way of dealing with the quality debate discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a technique used to check and improve the quality of a product or service. The term is used to describe a number of related procedures. This chapter considers benchmarking and its applicability to higher education. The various meanings of the term "benchmarking", and the claims made for it are discussed. Some authors claim major and continuing improvements from its use, others suggest that it inappropriate for higher education.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has devised a particular procedure which it has called benchmarking but which is at variance with most authors' views of what benchmarking should be. In particular this applies to the way in which the benchmarks are established. This would suggest that some of the major benefits claimed for other procedures also known as benchmarking may well not apply. However, it is probable that these other procedures would be difficult, if not impossible, to apply in higher education.

The development of the QAA benchmarking procedures followed from the Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997). The final part of the chapter is a critical review of the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1999) subject benchmarking process in general, and the Unit 25 benchmarks for hospitality, tourism, leisure and sport in particular (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a).

3.1 Introduction – a definition of benchmarking

Benchmarking is a term that is widely used in literature concerned with quality issues, in education and elsewhere. However, the term is used in a variety of ways with quite disparate meanings. A fundamental distinction is whether the benchmarks are preordained externally; or whether they derive from the benchmarking process itself, and are therefore internally derived goals. In the literature about quality, this latter approach is regarded as "proper" benchmarking. This is sometimes endowed with remarkable powers of quality enhancement, which are usually linked to the Total Quality Management (TQM) approach (Zairi & Hutton, 1995), which was discussed in section 2.5.

The term "benchmark" seems to derive from the use of the word by surveyors to describe permanent marked points of reference, for accurately locating their instruments (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971). The semantic argument would thus support the preordained approach. However, the fixed notion of the derivation would not fit comfortably with either approach noted above. In both cases, claims are made that benchmarking has quality improvement as a major objective. An implication of this is that the benchmarks will change over time. This is in marked contrast to the original use of the term.

The QAA benchmarking process, discussed in section 3.5, seems destined to produce benchmarks fixed for considerable periods. It is difficult to see how the lengthy process of establishing the benchmarks could be frequently repeated. It also takes time for any changes to be manifested in a curriculum. One purpose is to provide information for stakeholders in the process, as to precisely what is being supplied; in particular to potential students and employers of graduates. Thus changes would be confusing and counterproductive, and need to be made sparingly and infrequently.

A definition that encompasses all possibilities inherent in the term benchmarking is probably not very helpful. The common thread is that of comparison with some sort of reference point. It is the establishment of these reference points, and the use to which the comparison is put, that provide the debate.

3.2 Types of benchmarking

This section explains briefly the various types of benchmarking noted in the literature.

Writers on the process of benchmarking have identified an assortment of methods that can be employed, usually three (Codling, 1995), or four (Alstete, 1996; Zairi, 1996; Jackson, 2001). These authors were writing from the perspective of quality enhancement, and they adopted the derivative approach noted earlier. This means that the benchmarks are produced following a review of other practitioners, with a view to emulating good, or even best, practice. Schofield (1998), writing from a broader perspective, included a fifth method, in addition to the four of Alstete (1996) mentioned above. This encompasses the types of benchmarking where the benchmarks are preordained before the start of the process. This occurs when the benchmarks are produced by an external agency, and are provided as guidelines, or possibly as mandatory requirements.

Schofield's five types are:

1) internal;

2) external competitive;

3) external collaborative;

4) external trans-industry ("best-in-class");

5) 'implicit'.

The names given to the five types are reasonably indicative of the procedure followed in deriving the benchmarks, and cover a range of methods. The first four have the common

approach of collecting data from outside the immediate area of concern, and determining the key quality aspects. These data are then used to suggest changes that can be made to the activity under scrutiny, in order to improve it. As the categories listed above suggest, this can be from within the same organisation, or from outside it. This can be in a situation where mutual improvement is being sought, or where it is hoped to gain competitive advantage. A key point, is that the individuals and organisations that are going to apply the benchmarks, are the ones that are deriving them. The proponents of this type of procedure, claim that it is largely this process of self-production of the benchmarks that leads to the quality improvements, rather than aiming for the benchmarks themselves (Zairi, 1996).

The fifth category of "implicit" is more related to the original use of the term, as the comparators are determined by an external agency. These are then used as a way of assessing the quality of an organisation or its products.

The benchmarking process, introduced into UK higher education following the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997), is a hybrid of the external-collaborative and the implicit. Groups, composed mainly of academic staff from relevant departments, were set up to produce the benchmarks in a particular subject area. Thus, although they are essentially determined by an outside agency - the QAA, they have been produced by people within the system. However, the group of university academics involved was necessarily small. So it could be argued that for most users, the benchmarks have been externally determined and imposed. As is noted later in 3.6, this was exacerbated in Unit 25 because of the widely varying interests spanned by the benchmarking group, and therefore the few people involved from each specific subject included in the group. This use of the term in the UK seems to equate them with a sort of performance indicator, this was the usage employed in the report of the National

Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education. (Dearing, 1997), and is in line with the dictionary definition noted in section 3.1.

A major difficulty with benchmarking, in a higher education institution, is the heterogeneous nature of the operation. Even within a specific programme, the variety of stakeholders and their views may produce a corresponding variety of what are seen as the most important features. There must therefore be the same criticism of benchmarking as for performance indicators, *i.e.* measuring only the measurable and ignoring the less easily measurable. This will be particularly the case when considering national standards meant to apply generally to a wide range of programmes.

There is further discussion of the QAA benchmarking process in section 3.5.

3.3 Accountability versus enhancement

This section explores the two main uses of benchmarking, and discusses the extent to which they are compatible.

To some extent at least, the debate over what is meant by the term benchmarking mirrors the issue of whether quality assessment systems are about enhancement or accountability, which was discussed earlier, in section 2.4.2. Schofield (1998) sees the various approaches as parts of a continuum, going from comparisons of fixed data at one extreme, to part of a comprehensive quality improvement programme at the other. Although philosophically this seems a useful conceptualisation, in practice it seems to operate as more of a dichotomy. Indeed some authors have suggested the two approaches are incompatible (see discussion in section 2.4.2). Certainly using external sources for establishing benchmarks, and comparing performance with them, raises the issue of the

exposing of deficiencies. The consequence of that, in the accountability sense, must surely limit the use of the external approaches noted in the previous section.

The accountability aspect fits well with the concept of benchmarking as measuring against a standard. This standard can be predetermined, or it can be a ranking compared with others assessed by the same measure. In some sense, this ranking or comparative feature, connects with the idea of benchmarks evolving as a result of the activity, rather than being preordained. However, the connection is tenuous, as the features being compared have been usually determined in advance by an external agency. Although the comparison point derives from the data, the measure has been devised separately, with little or no input from the people or institution being measured. As discussed in section 3.2, this is the case even with the QAA benchmarks statements, which have been developed by a few members of the appropriate academic group.

The measures used tend to be numerical values. These lend themselves to manipulation and comparison more readily than arguably more important qualitative ones. In fact, even when the measure would appear to be qualitative in nature, a numerical value is sometimes assigned, and then manipulated, as if it were a mathematical certainty rather than an analogue. A good example of that approach was the "subject review" process of quality assessment in higher education where achievement in six areas was judged qualitatively. The qualitative categories of achievement in each area were given a number, which represented the descriptive category in a rank from 1 to 4 (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000b). Therefore, by their nature, these judgements were in no sense arithmetical. However, perhaps inevitably, the six scores were added together by most people to give an overall score out of 24. This was compounded by the overall score bands being themselves classified into excellent, good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory. The summation of the numerical grades was not referred to in the

handbook (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000b), but was widely done. Indeed it seemed inevitable, given the process and its consequence for recruitment *etc.*. However, the process modified in 2002 diminished this. The categories used to classify the quality of provision were reduced to three. The overall process was limited by much greater reliance on the ongoing internal quality control mechanisms of each institution, rather than brief summative inspection at infrequent intervals (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2002).

The other use of the term benchmarking is to describe the process of deriving the appropriate measures, by an examination of all aspects of the processes *etc.*, to establish a desired set of goals. This is closely akin to various forms of quality enhancement. However, it does not fit well with the accountability model, which it has been suggested, actually reduces quality by concentrating on what is easily measured and compared between various institutions (Taylor, 2001). This alternative form of benchmarking is especially intended to improve quality, and was developed for that purpose. In fact, it is argued that the actual process can have a major positive influence, by focusing attention on various aspects of the organisation (Weller, 1996).

An example of this approach is that of the Commonwealth Universities Benchmarking Club (CUBC) (Wragg, 1998). An important feature of this example is the confidentiality ensured by the process, and the concomitant fact that no funding decisions are reliant on it (Schreiterer, 1998). Thus the process, although possibly effective in improving quality, is not suitable for ensuring accountability. A key part of the type of benchmarking used by CUBC, is the need for organisations, and the people in them who are involved in the collaborative benchmarking, to be honest and open in terms of information given and assessments made. Indeed, the CUBC is based on this very assumption, all information being taken at face value by the people examining it (Wragg, 1998).

It seems inevitable that if *e.g.* funding was dependent upon the results of the exercise then institutions would be less likely to participate voluntarily (Farquhar, 1998). Coercion would be needed, which is contrary to the spirit needed for quality enhancement to be achieved. This would appear to be a significant limitation of the quality enhancement model.

The use of benchmarking to gain competitive advantage is likely to be limited, because of the natural inclination of companies and individuals to conserve to themselves, those factors that make them better than their competitors. In higher education, the exchange of ideas may be less hindered by this limitation. Exchange of ideas through conferences, journals and personal contacts, and the testing of these via peer review, is a well established practice, an integral part of academic life. Indeed Alstete (1995) claims, that the methodology of this type of benchmarking is *"especially suited"* for use in higher education, because the familiarity of the process requiring research resulting in data acquisition.

Concerns over the inappropriate use of data have been noted. For example, a benchmarking club was set up in 1996 in Germany by a small group of universities. Efforts were made to prevent information on staff-student ratios, research funding and many other statistical performance indicators, from reaching the State Government. This was because the senior staff feared that the information would be used for funding decisions *etc.*, without the detailed consideration of why there was a difference between higher education institutions. This might mean pressure to conform to an inappropriate norm (Schreiterer, 1998). A similar point about confidentiality, and the prevention of use by funding providers, is made by Wragg (1998), when he discusses the Commonwealth Universities Benchmarking Club. The negative consequences of the misuse of data are

described in a brief discussion of an early example of benchmarking in higher education in Canada (Schofield, 1998).

Determining what to benchmark can problematical, even when the individuals involved are determining benchmarks by for their own use. When discussing the setting up of the Commonwealth Universities Benchmarking Club, Wragg (1998) notes that one of the problems encountered, was that it had to devise its own benchmarks. He seems to see the establishing of the benchmarks as a further obstacle to be overcome, rather than as the *raison d'être* that other authors have claimed. For example, Schofield (1998) sees it as highly positive, in the specific instance described by Wragg.

3.4 Benchmarking as a quality strategy

This section considers the extent to which benchmarking can be used to improve quality in higher education, and a reported example of its use is briefly examined.

Zairi & Hutton (1995) suggest that benchmarking is concerned with quality improvement – in fact they seem to use the terms as synonymous. Certainly, in their view, the reason for undertaking benchmarking, is to improve quality rather than judge it. They briefly discuss education and provide specific examples of good practice. An investigation of these examples reveals that apart from a vague reference to teaching methods, the examples centred around what might be called performance indicators – measurable factors that could be easily compared. It is these performance indicators, discussed in section 2.3.4, which have been criticised for emphasising factors which arguably have little to do with the quality of education being provided *e.g.* increased enrolment; and contract research income.

The limited range of examples given in support of benchmarking, is illustrative of the problems of achieving quality improvement by this means. What are arguably the real issues of quality of education, what and how the students are learning, are not addressed because they are too difficult. There is the assumption that if some aspects are improved, everything else will be of better quality.

This must lead to a questioning of the assumption, that benchmarking as a process will automatically lead to quality improvement. The advocates of benchmarking claim that this is a natural consequence of carrying out the process. However, they leave themselves an incontrovertible "get out clause" which is that this only applies if the system is properly applied and so if it fails, it is because it has not been done properly. The conditions necessary for "proper" application are so stringent, *e.g.* everyone in the organisation fully committed, that it is inevitable that there will never be complete compliance (Chaffee & Sherr, 1993).

An example, of what is described as benchmarking in an educational context, is reported by Brownell & Jameson (1995). They discuss the redesign of a "Master in Management in Hospitality" at Cornell University, USA. As part of this process, certain curriculum areas were identified as being of particular importance, in so far as they reflected certain critical graduate capabilities. The areas were determined by academic staff, students and by industry. These areas had benchmarks assigned to them, which represented levels of achievement that all students were required to achieve. Appropriate support was provided on an individual basis to facilitate this. Thus the benchmarks appeared to be both a target and a measure. Not surprisingly considerable success was reported. However, it does suggest that it may be possible in an educational context, both to derive suitable benchmarks, and to use them for quality improvement. It should perhaps be noted, that the people directly involved devised the benchmarks. This example reinforces the point that

people directly involved devised the benchmarks. This example reinforces the point that quality improvements are a result of participation in the process of devising the benchmarks, rather than simply a consequence of the benchmarks being available. This stands in contrast to the production and incorporation of the QAA subject benchmarks, discussed in the next section (3.5).

3.5 Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education subject benchmarking

In this section the origins of the QAA benchmarking are traced, and the process is described and discussed. The pilot benchmarks are used as exemplars of different products of the process, and to highlight some of the difficulties inherent in this approach. The related issue of performance indicators is examined, followed by a detailed discussion of the specific benchmarks connected to hospitality management.

3.5.1 The development of Quality Assurance Agency benchmarking

The introduction of the use of subject benchmarks by the Quality Assurance Agency, followed from the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997). In recommendation 25 the report suggested that minimum standards be established in various subject areas.

The development of the benchmarks was included as a part of the consultation document in March 1998 (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998a). This was to be at a threshold level of performance as recommended by the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997).

When the process was published (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998b), it was supported by the results of the consultation which indicated "*overwhelming support from employers and students*" for the provision of intended outcomes (Quality Assurance Agency. 1998b p.2). Thus benchmarks were included despite the fact that only 25% of higher education

institutions expressed support for the principle of their introduction. It fact, it appears that the concerns of employers and students might have been met by the use of programme specifications, which were of less concern to higher education institutions. However, a further justification was that they had been specifically recommended by the Dearing report (Dearing, 1997), with some emphasis being put upon the fact that the notion of producing benchmarks had originated from that report (Quality Assurance Agency. 1998b). This emphasis was repeated in the next QAA update on their progress (Quality Assurance Agency, 1999).

Although this repeated justification could be seen as defensive, some authors have suggested that benchmarking has been developing for many years. For example, Lund & Jackson (2000) claim that the introduction of benchmarking was the culmination of two decades of striving to increase student numbers, without a concomitant increase in funding, and without a decline in quality. Yorke (2000) similarly claims that benchmarking has been employed in higher education for a long time. He maintains that external examiners have undertaken benchmarking for many years. Jackson (2000b) makes the same point. Conversely, it could be said that externals have simply used a subjective view based on their own experience or prejudice. Consequently, from this perspective, the QAA benchmarking process could be argued to be the antithesis of what had previously been done. Benchmarking's fundamental requirement for an agreed and fixed point of reference appears to be missing from the external examiner system.

Jackson (2000b) further claims that the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) validation system was a benchmarking process, or at least close to it. His basis for this seems to be the equating of any sort of comparison to benchmarking; whereas the very notion of benchmarking would seem to require explicit comparators. Jackson & Andrea (2000) make a more plausible case for subject benchmarking as having its origin in the

Professional and Statutory Body (PSB) requirements for courses. These requirements do seem more akin to the notion of threshold benchmarks as suggested by Dearing (Dearing, 1997).

The level at which benchmark standards should be set has been a matter of some debate. Harvey & Mason (1995) claimed that threshold levels were the easiest to determine and were the preferred level of specification for professional and regulatory bodies and for academics. However, the Graduate Standards Programme research had indicated that threshold standards posed difficulties (Higher Education Quality Council, 1997). Brown (1999) suggests that this was because a single threshold is not possible and a number raises difficulties. The use of near failure as a standard is also problematic for universities (Brown, 1999). In addition, the indication was that considerable work on developing a new culture would be required before threshold standards could be introduced (Armstrong, 1999). The Graduate Standards Programme had indicated that a typical or modal performance was more appropriate for the setting of standards. The National Committee of Inquiry choose to emphasise the benchmarks being at the threshold level, and it formed part of Recommendation 25 (Dearing, 1997). Although the "*highest end of the spectrum*" was also mentioned (Dearing, 1997 p. 157), it appears to be of lesser importance, as it did not figure in the recommendations.

Following this recommendation, the initial QAA documents referred to the benchmarks being at the threshold level (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998a). Consultation and the results of the pilots, discussed in section 3.5.3, suggested that this would be problematic (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998b). The modal student appeared to be a more appropriate level at which to pitch the benchmarks and this was considered more important and that threshold standards would follow (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998b). By May 1999 both were required, although with the typical attainment as the main

standard (Quality Assurance Agency, 1999). In fact, benchmarking groups have opted for a variety of approaches often including a modal level. (*e.g.* Quality Assurance Agency, 2000a).

3.5.2 A critique of Quality Assurance Agency benchmarking

The QAA procedure for academic quality review incorporates what is referred to as benchmarking (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000b). However, the process for deriving the benchmarks, does not fit directly into any of the types of benchmarking identified by the various authors writing in the field as discussed in section 3.2. Instead, the process has been that a set of benchmarks for selected subject areas have been produced by appointed subject benchmarking groups. Jackson (2001) claims that the process has been narrowly interpreted as a bureaucratic imposition, but that it can be part of a drive to improve quality based on professional accountability. This is a difficult argument to sustain given that for the very large majority of academics, the benchmarks have been imposed as a mandatory requirement. Holloway & Francis (2002) point out the limited scope of the benchmarking groups. They emphasise the distinction between benchmarks and benchmarking. The QAA version is the former. Holloway & Francis (2002) claim that most academics view the process as remote, resulting in an externally imposed restriction on what they do. There is the possibility that courses will be changed to fit in with the benchmarks without making any improvement. Lund's (1998) warning may be relevant. She suggests that benchmarking exercises fail if the participants get bogged down in the exercise, rather than focussing on the original purpose of quality improvement. This must be a real risk in the application of the QAA benchmarks.

A positive aspect is that the benchmarking process is an attempt to grapple with some of the arguably more significant qualitative issues, rather than simply looking at available

quantitative data. It may also have the effect of providing external reassurance that standards of university courses are being maintained. They are probably better suited to this purpose than to quality improvement. However, it is important how the assessment of achievement against these benchmarks is reported. The dilemma with the reporting is that descriptive reports are very difficult to compare. There is the temptation to allocate points to qualitative categories, these points can then be used as absolute numbers, as criticised in section 3.3.

Lomas (1999) comments there are a wide variety of cultures found in higher education institutions. He questions whether, as a consequence, a quality assurance approach based on standards and benchmarks can be fair and accurate.

In discussing the level of detail which would be necessary to establish appropriate detail for a system of quality assessments, the QAA suggested that *"around 40"* subject groups would be the appropriate number to give a satisfactory level of specificity. This would:

> "*allow meaningful statements ...accommodate innovation and development and reflect the diversity of UK higher education, whilst avoiding the risk of curricular prescription"* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998a, p.17).

It was claimed that *"significantly less than 40 would be too general"*; whereas *"significantly more"* would increase the information value, but this would bring with it the dangers of "*curricular prescription"* noted above. Further disadvantages would be, much greater difficulty in establishing the benchmarks, and increased costs. No particular justification was given for the assertion that 40 groups was about right, and it seems probable that politics and cost were major determinants. Certainly the support from employers and students for more detail (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998b) would have been better served with more subject groups.

The benchmarks produced by the benchmarking groups, are for use both by the subject review teams assessing a particular programme or department, and by course teams in developing their course. Thus the benchmarks are determined by a sub-group of the constituency, that will be subject to their application as a standard. In fact, for most of the people involved, it will be close to Schofield's (1998) implicit model, as they will have had little or no involvement in their production. This is particularly true of Unit 25, as having incorporated a number of disparate subject areas; the necessarily small team contained only two or three members from each of the four constituent subject areas of hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism.

An important issue is how such statements can be used in a quality assessment by assessing teams, other than to ensure that programme specifications/syllabi contain certain items. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (2000b) handbook claims that the benchmark statements are not lists of specific knowledge. Rather, they provide a conceptual framework; indicate the intellectual capability, demands and understanding which should be developed; and indicate required techniques and skills. Jackson (2001) reiterates and stresses this point, that the benchmarks are not statements of curricula but of general intellectual outcomes. However, it is somewhat disingenuous to separate the two. Once the general items have been removed, what is left is subject specific material, which must be linked to curricular content. Indeed in the next paragraph of this paper, it is stated that the benchmarks should include the "*attributes ... in terms of subject knowledge and understanding, subject skills and other skills.*" (Jackson, 2001, p.231).

It seems likely that the QAA approach, especially because of benchmarking, will produce a situation where for a period of time - the period between the reviews of the benchmark statements - all institutions will be in a state of stasis. After a stage when institutions are

adapting to the benchmarks, any significant changes may only occur when the benchmarks are altered nationally. This affect depends upon the detail of the benchmarks, more detail leads to less possibility of modification.

It should be noted that the use of benchmarks by the QAA, would not be recognised as such by most authors writing about quality issues. These authors would claim, that it is the process of deriving the benchmarks, that is primarily responsible for quality enhancement (Zairi, 1996). The type of benchmarking identified in the Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) and used as a basis for the QAA version, is essentially to ensure that students achieve a fixed level. It appears to have nothing to do with quality enhancement. Once the benchmarks have been fully incorporated, any changes will, by definition, not be included in them until at least the next review of the subject benchmarks. Another possible affect could be to add more incentive for the generalising of the benchmarks so as to allow some flexibility for innovation. This would make them less useful for guidance and monitoring.

3.5.3 Pilot benchmark statements as examples of possible approaches

In the following section, the subject benchmarks, which were produced in the first phase of the QAA benchmarking process as pilots, are used to illustrate some of the important issues.

A major dilemma of determining appropriate benchmarks is exemplified by the approaches taken by the three pilot subject areas (chemistry, history and law). Different views were given as to what the benchmark should represent in terms of student achievement when studying for an honours degree. One group (law) used the threshold or minimum acceptable, which was similar to the second group's (chemistry) use of the minimum acceptable for chartered professional status. The third group (history) used the

requirements of the typical student (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1999).

As outlined in section 3.5.1, the report of the National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education - the "Dearing Report"- (Dearing, 1997) suggested that threshold standards were of particular importance. However, the work on the graduate standards programme suggested that academics in general had difficulty with that, and preferred to set levels with reference to the 2i/2ii honours classification boundary (Higher Education Quality Council, 1996). In fact, each of the pilot groups also produced a specification of what was required at each classification level. A problem with these is that they are generic descriptors of what might be expected of a piece of work at the various levels. They could be substituted for each other with virtually no amendment; they seem to have little connection to subject benchmarking.

After determining what is required at each level, it has then to be decided what proportion of work produced by a student has to fit these descriptors for a classification to be awarded overall. For example, can a student who is producing some work at the 3rd class level, rise a class (or two) by producing a first class piece (or two, or three)? It may be possible to determine which class one piece of work fits into, but the aggregation of these only seems possible by allocating a number to the assessment. The only other possibility would seem to be some sort of matrix, which could put various permutations into the appropriate overall classification. This would mean, either a set of linked matrices, or a common subdivision *e.g.* six units a year. In turn, the implication is of a great deal of commonality in terms of weighting of different parts of the courses. This aggregation to give an overall grade echoes a major criticism of the Subject Reviews. Qualitative judgements were given numerical values, which were then manipulated mathematically.

One of the benchmark pilots (law) indicated percentage marks for each category, as well as a list of criteria. Some of the difficulties can be explored by using the first class category as an example. The answer should contain *"no errors or omissions"* which seems a fairly tall order, seemingly implying a perfect answer, but actually describing a standard which is required to achieve 70% or more. Another curiosity is that to achieve the lst class (*i.e.* a minimum of 70%) there is the need to excel in at least one of five criteria. In order to get *"a high first (75+%)"* you need to show originality as well as to excel in *"most if not all"* of the criteria. This seems quite a leap for an extra 5%, quite apart from the notion that a *"high lst"* is only 5% up the scale from a *"lst"*, and leaves 25% of the full scale unused. The implication is for a rapidly steepening gradient of achievement. It must also be the case that in subjects where distinguishing between answers is less subjective, perhaps in numeric subjects, a first class answer would by definition still contain errors, unless a mark of 100% is achieved and given.

There is considerable variation between the benchmark statements produced by the three pilot areas in term of the amount of detail involved, history appearing to be much more detailed than law and chemistry. It seems that specifics of this sort could be used, to ensure that what has been deemed critical aspects, are included in any programme in that subject area. This could be important, but does not seem central to the quality issue as viewed by the QAA. It is claimed that the intention is not to produce *"national curricula"* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998a). A similar comment is made in the preamble to the Unit 25 benchmarks (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). However, it seems inevitable that the benchmarks will in fact be regarded as such, if they are used as part of the academic review process, or any other quality assessment that is in the public domain. The key issue is whether this is necessarily wrong or to be avoided, as the various documents imply.

Professional bodies which regulate professions, such as engineering, law and medicine have for a long time specified curricula, partly in order to reassure the general public and other stakeholders. Similarly, the intention of the QAA's benchmarking programme has as a major objective, reassuring stakeholders. Specifying curricula, at least in core aspects, might facilitate this.

None of the pilot subjects were directly vocational subjects. Even in the area of law, the benchmarks specifically included those programmes not leading to a qualification to practise law. Successfully completing an undergraduate degree in law gives exemption from only the introductory year of the postgraduate qualification. This is required to enter the practical training period. This means that the difficult question of whether and how to include practical skills was not addressed at this stage. However, this is an important issue in hospitality management courses and is considered in section 3.6.

Apart from the overall classification descriptions, which as noted above, were very similar and in any case in general use, there was considerable difference in the level of detail between the pilot areas. There was, however, considerable similarity in the *"generic skills"* identified. Only the history group appeared to have included what could be called processes. Therefore, several of the areas of scrutiny in the QAA subject review procedure were not included.

In chemistry and law the benchmarks appear to be exclusively to do with outcomes, in terms of student ability. This raises the question of whether it is possible, or even necessary, to write any meaningful specifications for others aspects of the higher education provision, in particular the less tangible aspects. It may be possible to assume that they are reflected in the outcomes. If so, the need is for identifiable meta outcomes, which are deemed to stand in place of the actual desired outcomes, which cannot

themselves be measured. For example, when assessing a multifaceted attribute like problem solving, a mark on a case study may be used to indicate the degree to which this outcome has been met.

3.6 Benchmarks for Unit 25: Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

The Unit 25 benchmarks published by the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a) are examined and their relationship to hospitality management programmes is discussed.

3.6.1 Introduction and overview

The development of benchmark statements under the aegis of the QAA (see section 3.5.1), published since the commencement of this study, has provided an officially sanctioned version of standards (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). These can be used to develop, and evaluate, hospitality industry higher education courses. A group of mainly academics, from departments offering courses included in the subject area, were formed into a subject-benchmarking group. This group was charged with the responsibility of producing the appropriate material. This material is intended to be used as an aid to developing programmes, and to aid the academic review process (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000b).

The benchmarks for this topic area have to cover a wide range of subjects, as indicated by the title of this section. The so-called "subject area" of "Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism" is arguably impossibly wide for such an exercise. It includes such a variety of programmes in terms of content and learning outcomes, that meaningful common statements are precluded, except at a level of generality that could include almost any degree programme (see later). The programmes in this group include: theoretical tourism

courses closely akin to economics; courses which are essentially business and management; and sports and leisure courses. Some of the latter have close affinity to paramedical courses such as physiotherapy; others are initial teacher training for sports teachers. In addition, there are the traditional hospitality management courses, with their sometimes contentious emphasis on acquisition of operational skills specific to the hospitality industry. The grouping together of this disparate medley, suggests that the discrimination of cognate areas was not a consideration. It is difficult to see, how breaking down the Unit 25 group into its components, could have led to a dangerous *"stifling of diversity"* as suggested in the QAA consultation paper (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998).

The difficulty of producing a common set of benchmarks for this conglomeration is acknowledged by the preliminary statement by the chair of the group that developed the benchmarks. She stated that *"five, diverse subject associations"* were involved. These were: the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences; the Council for Hospitality Management Education; the Leisure Studies Association; the National Liaison Group for Higher Education in Tourism; and the UK Standing Conference for Leisure, Recreation and Sport. In a somewhat confusing alternative use of the word *"subject"*, she also highlights the wide range of subjects *"from the natural sciences through business and management to the social sciences"*. Moreover, it was recognised that this range included widely differing academic traditions and cultures (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a).

Considering this disparate, in many ways unrelated, group of programmes, the pragmatic generic/specific arrangement adopted by the benchmarking group seems sensible. A set of generic statements was produced, which are applicable across the various different elements of the subject area. In addition, four main strands were identified *viz:*

Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism; and for each of these a set of *"subject specific guidelines"* was produced. The use of the word guideline is significant, as one of the objectives of the benchmarking group was to avoid over prescription (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). As the chair of the group put it in the introductory letter: "*At all times the benchmarking group has been fully aware of the need to avoid prescribing a National Curriculum*". As mentioned earlier in 3.5.2, this is taken as a given with the implication that such a thing would prevent diversity and be undesirable.

The group recognised that it was important to preserve the distinctive features of the various strands. This can be argued to have led to a lack of precision, or appropriate flexibility, depending upon the point of view taken. Although a number of specific subjects for inclusion are given, the paragraph is prefaced by the caveat that these subjects *"might"* be included. Some general skills are also indicated though again qualified by the point that some, or all, might be included. These general skills statements could be applied far more widely than just in this Unit 25 group. For example, under a general heading of *"Skills specific to Unit 25"* is outlined a set of four skills including: *"graduates being able to ...plan, design, execute and communicate a sustained piece of independent intellectual work using appropriate media"*. Such a skill could be comfortably included in the specification for virtually any degree course, in any subject. There is in addition a set of *"key skills"* which also seem to be a set of generic, widely applicable skills (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a).

Also provided is a set of performance indicators, split into three levels of performance – *"threshold, typical and excellent"*. Some issues concerning this nomenclature are discussed later in this section. These performance indicators are claimed to be designed to help develop programmes against the benchmarks. As these performance indicators are generic, and the same for the four subject areas, they are vague. Like the skills noted

above, they could be applied very widely *e.g.* a typical performance in the knowledge area is to *" demonstrate a critical understanding of the development of knowledge in their particular subject domain"* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). The performance levels hinge on adjectives and adverbs, which qualify the area under consideration. In the example just quoted a threshold performance is to *" demonstrate an understanding of the development of knowledge in their particular subject domain"* (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a).

The purpose of the exercise was to provide a list, which could be used to help judge the quality of degree programmes. In view of this, it is interesting that the deliberations of the benchmarking group should result in this indefinite set of benchmarks. In part, this somewhat indistinct catalogue is a reflection of the problems resulting from putting such a wide range of course areas in the same subject group. It is the expression of the variety of aspects and emphases, which are included in the various strands encompassed by the subject group, and of the historical development of such courses. As mentioned in section 1.5, they have mostly evolved from the further education tradition, both in terms of the academic culture and in terms of reflecting the employment requirements of local industry. However, as noted in section 3.5.2, even when more discrete cognate areas were involved, specificity is low.

The section of the benchmark statements for Unit 25 entitled: *"programmes broadly concerned with Hospitality"*, specifically discusses hospitality courses. Here it is claimed that although this type of course originated from vocational need, they have spread beyond this to include a range of other subjects (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2000a). This suggests that, at least some of these additional elements are not necessary in the vocational context. As noted earlier in section 1.5, the conflict between vocationalism and academic respectability would explain the inclusion of non-vocational

aspects. It also encompasses the pedagogical view of education being a good thing in its own right, irrespective of the use to which it is put. However, it is difficult to discern non-vocational elements in either the specific or generic benchmarks.

An alternative view would be, that in order to be a manager in the modern hospitality industry, it is necessary to have an understanding of a range of subjects. In other words, the vocational need still drives the curriculum, and this appears to be the view reflected in the benchmarks. Certainly programmes are developed with the input of the industry, with the more academic areas being seen as a necessary inclusion to ensure degree status, even though they may appear less relevant to the vocational need. However, what is vocational is not altogether clear. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001) reports that a common criticism of hospitality higher education, is that it concentrates too much on academic (business) subjects, and not enough on operational skills. Despite this, research shows that industry actually wants the business skills (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). It is claimed that it is the conceptual skills, rather than technical ones, which managers require (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001).

The subject benchmarks reflect the emphasis on vocationalism with frequent reference being made to the *"context of the hospitality industry"*. This issue of relevance is an ongoing one. It engages with the much broader issue of what is the higher education curriculum for, as discussed in section 1.4. If the multifaceted approach is accepted, then it is perhaps inevitable that viewed from a certain stakeholder perspective, some parts will seem inappropriate, superfluous or irrelevant.

In the general introduction, which talks about the courses covered in the set of benchmarks being involved in *"enriching life experiences"* for customers of the industry;

the multi-disciplinary character of the courses in this sector was recognised. However, it is suggested that only *"most"* are inter-disciplinary (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). This raises the intriguing possibility that there are courses/programmes, which have intellectually diverse components that are not connected. Nonetheless, the generic skills suggested that it is mandatory that students understand the need for inter-disciplinary approaches. Given the overt vocational focus, it does seem unlikely that hospitality management programmes would contain areas not, at least partially, orientated towards hospitality management. By their very nature they are interdisciplinary.

The difficulty of including all existing programmes, is well illustrated by the suggestion that *"most"* programmes use management as a key part of the focus of the programme. HEFCE has reported (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998) that there was a clear preference within the industry for hospitality management graduates for management positions. This position was emphasised by more recent research (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). Given the overtly vocational nature already discussed, it is hard to see how it could be otherwise, as graduates are likely to aspire to management positions. In fact, it is arguable that this is the *raison d'être* of such courses. Despite this, the implication in the benchmark statements is that there are programmes that do not do this.

A number of what are referred to as *"components"* are listed as being typical of inclusion.

Five such components are specified:

1) "management of technical operations"

2) "management disciplines within the context of hospitality"

3) "hospitality industry and its global environment"

4) "hospitality consumer and the service encounter"

5) "opportunity ... of industrial placement"

(Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a, page 4)

Although 1) and 2) are fairly specific in orientation, they are very general in terms of what they encompass. There seems a general agreement that such components are appropriate parts of, indeed requirements of, hospitality programmes (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998). Item 5) is almost always a part of such courses. Item 4) would seem to follow as inevitable once you assume a vocational focus on an industry which is a quintessentially service industry. The notion implied by the use of *"typical"*, that some of these elements might not be included in a hospitality programme, seems inconceivable.

Item 3) is more debatable, in fact it is difficult to specify what this means in practice. It does depend upon what is meant by the *"global environment"*. If it is related to international issues then programme titles, which explicitly include this area, would be expected to include appropriate aspects. In terms of fulfilling the industry requirements, then many international issues become much less important. In terms of individual students, an international perspective would presumably favour maximising employment. It is possible, even likely, that the term global environment is more concerned with how hospitality fits into its relationship with other industries *etc*.. In this case, the rather abstract view is not easy to include, and must rely on various subject disciplines making appropriate connections.

A considerable range of subject areas are suggested for possible inclusion in programmes, again the word *"typical"* is used. It is not clear what proportion of these were considered important for an hospitality management programme; but again the implication is that none is essential. One of the problems with such a list, is that different individuals or

departments may call the same subject a variety of things. For instance, *"management"* covers a variety of activities, but in the list six separate items are linked to the term. However, it is possible to argue that they are just subsets of the substantive term, and that the use of the term management subsumes them all. It could, in fact, be argued that all subjects would have a management focus in a hospitality management degree course, as discussed earlier.

3.6.2 Generic skills

This section elaborates on that part of the benchmarks devoted to generic skills. This is a matter of considerable importance in vocational courses, as discussed in section 4.3.

As well as providing these indications about what should be included in the specific sub area of hospitality, in a section entitled *"Knowledge and skills",* a variety of generic skills and abilities are identified. The introduction to this suggests that these are to be expected of any undergraduate, in varying amounts. The generic skills are divided into four domains: "*knowledge, intellectual skills, skills specific to Unit 25 and key skills*". As will be discussed, this is a somewhat arbitrary classification, as there is overlap between these areas. Arguably, some items could be just as well placed in one of the other domains.

It should be noted that it is suggested that the material should be contextualised at all levels (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). There is an issue here concerning the transferability of the skills – why is there a need for the emphasis on context if the skills are transferable between contexts? This appears to be suggesting that the skills are not entirely transferable. In which case, are they truly generic skills?

a) knowledge

The guideline document seems confused about the term knowledge. For example it talks about *"critical understanding"* and *"critical awareness"*. Indeed each of the items under this heading include the word *"understanding"* which seems to imply much more than knowledge. Some of the items specified in the knowledge section would require knowledge to carry them out, but would also require higher order cognitive skills to achieve. The impression given is that there is no specifiable generic knowledge, but in order to satisfy the requirements of the brief given to the group, something had to be put in that section.

b) intellectual skills

Although this section contains appropriate material, it was hard to distinguish from the previous section. For example under knowledge:" *graduates ...will be able to demonstrate their research and problem-solving abilities by critically understanding methods of acquiring, interpreting and analysing information appropriate to their context of study"*

Whereas under intellectual skills: "*graduates ... will be able to:*

- *describe and analyse information*
- *apply knowledge to the solution of ...problems"*

It is not necessary to explore these inconsistencies more fully, except perhaps to note their existence as indicative of the problems of defining graduateness in these terms.

c) skills specific to Unit 25

This subsection seems to be misplaced in that it is difficult to argue that a section dedicated to generic skills should contain a list of skills specific to a particular subject area. Closer examination revealed that the list could be generalised across a much wider

range of areas. The items are very vague and could be applied without alteration across a much broader spectrum than Unit 25; indeed they could be applied to almost any vocational area.

Another anomaly is the inclusion of a phrase which implies a dissertation or similar:

"graduates ...able to plan, design, execute and communicate a sustained piece of independent intellectual work using appropriate media"

Why this should be specific to Unit 25 rather than being included as an intellectual or key skill is unclear.

d) key skills

These relate to the issue of "graduateness" – the minimum standard that all graduates should reach, although this concept seems to have been dropped from the current quality discussions

The skills listed in this section seemed to be the only ones not connected to Unit 25 specifically. In the final part of this Key Skills section, discussion of *"approaches to programmes of study"*, the document identified three titles. Suitable approaches to each are indicated, although each one bears the qualification "*inter alia"*. Of the three titles, two –"management" and "studies" are appropriate for hospitality management courses. Only "management" has a vocational focus according to the benchmarks. The description of requirements for a course with management in the title, indicates that it is should be essentially vocational in nature. Indeed, one consequence of these definitions, is that given the vocational nature of hospitality courses already identified, management is probably the only appropriate epithet.

3.6.3 Hospitality management specific guidelines

The components suggested for hospitality management courses in the benchmarks, are generally in line with the literature used for the development of the questionnaire discussed in chapter 6. However, they are generally vague and non-prescriptive. The specific section relating to hospitality, prefaces the list of components to be included with a phrase which includes the caveat *"typically"*. The same word, as an adjective rather than an adverb, also prefaces a long list of possible subjects. These vary from specific subject areas such as *"law"* to the less definable *"entrepreneurship"*.

The most difficult to understand is *"the Hospitality industry and its global environment"* as it is not clear what is meant by this. It also seems less connected to the vocational aspects of the course except possibly in the influence it might have on *e.g.* marketing.

The subject areas are again predominantly non-contentious, although many of the separate components could arguably be subsumed into the term *"management"*. This is particularly true of the term *"entrepreneurship"*, which would seem to be an amalgam of various subjects, many of which could be described as management. The dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary, 1971) has this as *"the undertaking of enterprise"*; and an entrepreneur as a *"manager"*, which would seem to fall squarely into the remit of management. It is difficult to see how this might be taught as an entity. It seems to encompass a wide variety of areas, rather than to be a definable subject.

The subject benchmarks conclude with a set of so-called *"Performance Indicators"*. These provide more detail to various aspects of the benchmark statements. They are similarly vague, and would be difficult, if not impossible, to use for measuring the quality of a course. They are couched in terms of graduates' performance. They are noted as specifically not meant to be used as assessment or learning outcomes criteria, or to assess

students, but rather to *"inform the preparation of"* of these items. Curiously, given this exclusion, they are written in outcomes style as evidenced by an individual student.

Three levels of these performance indicators are given reflecting one of the styles of the pilot studies discussed in section 3.5.2. No qualification of these three levels is suggested, other than the column titles of *"threshold* performance", "*typical performance"* and *"excellent performance"*. The use of the term typical is interesting. It suggests what is currently being achieved, rather than establishing a standard to be achieved. It also implies that what students have been achieving should be regarded as a benchmark. It is perhaps instructive that this principle was not extended to the key skills. It may explain, at least in part, why performance indicators were not included for this, given the negative views generally about graduates' competence in these areas (Dearing, 1997).

The benchmarks were specifically meant for bachelors' degrees with honours. Therefore, it has to be presumed that the "*threshold*" refers to a borderline third class honours performance, and that the excellent refers to a first class honours. It is not clear whether this latter is intended as a threshold first class performance or perfection, although the latter seems very unlikely. This means that the marks range which was encompassed was probably 40 to 70, but possibly higher. Similarly, the middle level of typical gives no indication of its meaning, although the mythical average student is likely to be around the 2.2/2.1 border. The same comments as were made concerning the classification of the generic statements, obviously apply to this more detailed expansion of those. For example, many of the items under *"knowledge"*, would be more appropriately included under the heading *"intellectual*". The key skills are not included in these performance indicators and no reference is made to them at this point. It does seems that some semantic gymnastics were required to produce the three levels of performance, as distinguishing between them is not always clear.

A comparison of the benchmarks with the results of the current research can be found in chapter 11, and aspects of the Unit 25 benchmarks are compared with other vocational areas in section 4.5

3.7 Conclusions

The use of the term benchmarking is growing in higher education. In view of the emphasis being put on it by QAA, it seems certain to be a prominent feature for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, the term is defined and used in strikingly different ways, and this means that care needs to be exercised in any discussion of its value and applicability.

Considering the conditions supposedly essential to the application of successful benchmarking (Zairi, 1996), it becomes necessary to question whether they could ever be achieved in higher education. Lomas (1999) questions whether, in view of the wide variety of higher education institutions, it is possible to devise a quality assurance system based on benchmarks that is fair and accurate. The counter to this is to be found in the segregation of the QAA benchmarks into the various subject areas. This attempts to allow for this variety. This counter claim would seem to have some credibility. However, the discussion in section 3.6 has noted the way in which certain types of programme have been put into the same category as others with quite different perspectives. This would appear to be particularly acute with the subject area designated to include hospitality management. This must mean that many aspects are vague and therefore difficult to use for specific types of quality enhancement.

One major stumbling block may be the link usually made (*e.g.* Zairi & Hutton, 1995) between benchmarking and TQM. The latter, as discussed in section 2.5, has some fundamental problems of application to higher education. This is because of the imprecise

and arguable nature of the product and the customer. Both of these are intricately involved in TQM. Another may be the "all or nothing" approach which characterises much writing about benchmarking – total organisational commitment, all employees *etc*.. Whereas, the examples given by people working in the area are of much more modest extent and aspiration. The limited, cautious progressive approach of the CUBC (Wragg, 1998) suggests that it is possible to have partial adoption, although it must be remembered that this was done with a small group of committed members. The limited scope meant that only a few staff were involved, and the issues so far dealt with are essentially administrative.

The alternative view of benchmarking, as suggested by the Dearing report (Dearing, 1997) and adopted by the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998), is of establishing, and comparing with, some predetermined points of reference. The difficulties of devising appropriate reference points, the tendency for them to distort and inhibit developments *etc.* as discussed above, leads us into potential problems with this approach. It is also difficult to see how distinctive and individual provision can be maintained, as suggested by the QAA, if benchmarking of any specificity is to be applied. If the benchmarks are less specific then there is the alternative problem of how useful general statements will be to guide the providers or their assessors. The need to be inclusive may also produce a "lowest common denominator" affect. Thus far from picking the best, the benchmarks which include all or at least most of the current provision could be used.

Some form of audit of higher education is inevitable (Jary, 2002), so even though the QAA process can be considered seriously flawed, a return to the previous implicit system is not possible. Thus for most people in higher education, it is the QAA version of benchmarking that is important. This is despite its lack of credibility in quality

management circles, in view of the way in which the benchmarks are devised, revised and implemented. The threshold /typical student model is also clearly at odds with most benchmarking literature which sees achieving best practice as the key objective (Zairi, 1996). The necessarily static nature of the QAA model is another conflict with those who uphold benchmarking as part of a continuous improvement process (Zairi & Hutton, 1995).

However, the deriving of benchmarks for subject groups must be an improvement on the current common practice, of picking up a few numerical performance indicators and the use of these as a quality judgement. A major improvement should be the recognition that there may be fundamental differences between various types of programme, and that representatives from these programmes will have an important input. Jary (2002) suggests that despite the many criticisms of subject benchmarking, it does raise the possibility of subject disciplines regaining some control over quality. The acceptance that what is meant by quality should be established in relation to the context – the subject group – should be helpful. This would be especially important in vocational areas as it allows for particular requirements to be incorporated as a quality indicator, which would not be possible with a generic approach.

It seems that it may be possible to devise and use benchmarks to frame conceptual areas as the QAA claim, and this would be especially welcome in multi-disciplinary areas such as hospitality management. The challenge is to devise a list of statements, which can be used as a platform for both quality assessment and quality improvement.

3.8 Summary

Benchmarking has been developed in business contexts as a method of quality improvement. The term is used for a variety of methods with different emphases. Much of the literature is concerned with benchmarking as a quality enhancement process, although the suitability of its use for this purpose in higher education is debatable. Nevertheless, the use of benchmarking is growing in higher education having been given considerable impetus by the Dearing report (Dearing, 1997), and the QAA benchmarking process (Quality Assurance Agency, 1998b).

The version adopted by the QAA may be the most appropriate for use in higher education, even though it lends it self much more readily to quality assessment than it does to quality enhancement. The fixed points of reference mean that some of the major advantages claimed for benchmarking are not available. In particular, the benefits gained from deriving the benchmarks.

However, the QAA involvement means that benchmarking will be a part of higher education course development and quality assessment for the foreseeable future. Whether it will also be a part of quality enhancement or simply act as a barrier to innovation and development has yet to be seen. It is possible that the ability of a subject benchmarking group to establish particular benchmarks in their area of expertise could be a useful quality maintenance, or even enhancement, tool. It may be that the inclusion of appropriate benchmarks could be important in assisting vocational higher education courses to meet the requirements of the various stakeholders. However, a contentious issue is the extent to which the subject benchmarks should include vocational elements.

The next chapter considers the issue of vocational education in higher education. This is an area where the varying views of the various stakeholders has considerable significance. This in turn relates to the QAA benchmarking process with regard to the extent to which vocational elements have been included in the subject benchmarks.

Chapter 4: Vocational education

With a few exceptions of professional occupations such as law and medicine, vocational education is relatively new to higher education. The issue of vocationalism is a source of tension and a focus of dispute and debate between various stakeholders.

This chapter traces the history of vocational higher education in the UK, and discusses the concept of vocational education and its relation to higher education.

A key issue is the extent to which higher education should be responsible for skills acquisition, and whether some vocational courses, such as hospitality management, have a particular need for specific skills to be included. This is explored by comparing hospitality benchmarks with benchmarks for some other vocational subject areas. In addition, some contemporary studies on graduate perceptions of vocational courses are examined.

4.1 Vocational education - a definition

Moodie (2002) suggests that the term *"vocational education"* has a number of meanings. It cannot be defined as a single characteristic and the precise meaning depends upon the context in which it is used.

The term vocational education is used here, to imply a course that has a prime focus on the attributes and knowledge needed for a particular type of employment. It would be claimed, and is probably required, that personal intellectual development is also a feature of a vocational course. A non-vocational course has a prime focus on knowledge, intellectual endeavour and personal intellectual development for its own sake, with no obvious specific career link. However, there is a wide spectrum of

vocational courses from the highly job specific, to those providing generic skills applicable to a range of jobs.

4.2 The development of vocational higher education in the UK

There have been several cycles of institutions being set up to provide vocational education, then becoming more academic in orientation. This academic drift was seen as necessary for educational and status reasons, but then led to a perception that vocational education was being neglected (Silver & Brennan, 1988).

In the second half of the nineteenth century technological advances had led to the requirement for people educated in technological skills. New institutions were set up to address the problem, but these then evolved into universities. The professions became strongly linked to universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge. For most of these, there was little link between the degree subject and the career path (Lowe, 1990). Although the "new" universities had been set up to link with industry, the drive for academic respectability meant that they moved into providing a largely liberal arts education (Lowe, 1990).

Consequently, technical colleges were established by local authorities to cater for local industrial needs. Many of the courses were part time, which became the predominant types of provision. Most of the students had left school at 14 and there was limited progression into managerial positions (Lowe, 1990). Some of the technical colleges that provided sub-degree higher education, became Colleges of Advanced Technology and were converted into universities in the 1960s. Their subsequent expansion was mainly in non-technological areas such as business studies. Universities have traditionally been associated with a liberal education, encompassing knowledge for its own sake, rather than knowledge for specific employment (Silver & Brennan, 1988).

This latter role was of lower status and funding and was meant to be filled by other means, notably the polytechnics in the United Kingdom. Polytechnics, which were given university status in the early 1990s, were set up by Local Education Authorities to be closer to industrial needs. Nevertheless, most students enrolled on non-technological courses (Lowe, 1990). So again the vocational intention was diluted by academic drift.

The ex-polytechnics, the post-92 or "new" universities, are responsible for most vocational higher education (University Central Admission Service, 1998). Vocational education in longer established "old" universities tends to be restricted to the professions such as medicine and architecture (University Central Admission Service, 1998).

There has long been a debate concerning the relationship of higher education and vocationalism. The basic issue seems to be of status, that a deep rooted prejudice favours academic courses as more appropriate for certain sections of society. This was a debated issue from the nineteenth century, but the controversy has its origins much earlier, as is discussed in the next section.

4.3 Higher education and its relation to vocational education

This section looks at the notion of higher education preparing people for employment in specific jobs or industries. Vocational higher education has a mixed focus. In addition to the vocational elements, there is also the need to satisfy both the personal development aspirations, and crucially, the academic criteria, implicit in higher education. Dearing (1997) emphasises this variety of function across higher education. It is the balance between these elements that is a matter for debate.

The curriculum of vocational courses was thought to be focussed on particular employment requirements and therefore narrow, without the breadth associated with academic courses (Silver & Brennan, 1988). However. vocational courses typically cover a wide range of topics albeit in limited depth. The apparent contradiction can be explained by the notion of academic pursuits "broadening the mind" whereas vocational courses are more focussed on skills acquisition.

Vocational education has been regarded as subordinate to academic education for a very long time. The origins of this perspective can be traced back to classical Greece philosophers (Hyland, 2002). Since the advent of public education in Victorian times, academic pursuits have been viewed as the prerogative of the privileged classes, whereas more practical education was for the "lower orders" (Hyland, 2002).

This attitude persists, and there is a deep-seated prejudice which continues to ensure that vocational education is accorded lower status (Hyland, 2002). However, Melton (1995) claims that training is a part of education; knowledge and skills are inter-related and link education and training. Jones (1999) takes a similar view. She maintains that the low esteem given to training is misguided, in view of the expertise and subjectivity that is required in its assessment. West (2000) also points out the difficulty of assessing skills. He suggests that this fact, coupled with the lower esteem with which courses that develop skills are held, makes such courses problematic for higher education. Dearing (1997) maintains that skills acquisition will become increasingly important for graduates, as labour markets change.

The liberal education tradition of higher education has historically been concerned with the notion of the expansion of the intellect (Barnett, 1994). Nevertheless, some vocational areas have a long tradition of university education *e.g.* law medicine, and theology, although the teaching of these was historically essentially theoretical. Polytechnics were

specifically developed to fulfil the needs of industry for qualified personnel, by offering vocational higher education (Pratt, 1997). However most, if not all, of higher education could be said to be concerned with developing people, so they have the cognitive abilities to pursue a career. Hesketh (2000) has pointed out that higher education is a key provider of personnel to many employers.

Hammick (1996), using professional health care degrees as exemplars, highlights that the conflict between vocational and academic elements. This has resulted from a more explicit system of validation in recent years. Financial implications have led to a more political environment, and the vocational demands have had to be given less emphasis to accommodate the academic imperatives.

In addition, higher education advocates would claim that they have a responsibility for "broadening the minds", or some such abstract notion that is implicit in the word "education" as distinguished from "training". Thus, the argument would run, it is not the job of higher education to produce workers for a particular employment niche. Using this scenario, acquiring the skills required for particular job functions should be seen as training, and be the function of the employer, or possibly another part of the education system. The attributes coming from higher education are thus generic, and provide the graduate with the ability to acquire more specific skills as and when required. This perspective follows from the origins of the higher education system with its concentration on subjects that had little vocational element, and certainly no practical content, such as the classics.

It has been suggested that vocational courses are incompatible with higher education (Barrett, 1998). Pring (1992) has a similar view, claiming that vocational and academic courses are quite different, particularly when it comes to specifying outcomes. O'Connor (1996), takes a less extreme position, but in a general discussion of the nature of

vocational education (in a hospitality management journal), suggests that focusing too strongly on employment needs makes for an unsatisfactory education. He suggests that changing the term to practical, rather than vocational, will allow for a combination of understanding of basic principles with an appropriate level of performance.

Using ideas from a number of education authors (from Aristotle onwards), O'Connor suggests that the specification of learning outcomes and objectives has dominated curriculum design, and led to a limited view of education. This has been particularly true of vocational education. Linking the outcomes to industry, and identifying elements as "useful" begs the critical question - useful to whom? (O'Connor, 1996). This relates to the discussion about the nature of quality, as again the perspective of the definer is all important.

Gibbs (2001) is more moderate but he does stress that higher education should do more than prepare for a profession or employment. He suggests that the "*commoditisation*" implicit in this devalues the function of the university. Leslie (1993) claims that there is too much emphasis across Europe on the requirements for initial employment, rather than in developing the potential for personal development.

These views seem in marked contrast to the current vogue and pressure to specify learning outcomes. It may perhaps find an echo in the former National Council for Vocational Qualification's acknowledgement, that, whilst it is relatively straightforward to specify competencies *etc.* at lower levels, it becomes much more difficult at higher ones (National Council for Vocational Qualifications, 1995).

The learning outcomes approach, currently favoured by Quality Assurance Agency (Jackson, 2000), is subject to similar criticisms. Amongst the most serious of these is that

only measurable outcomes are given importance. James (2001) argues that aspects difficult to quantify are left out, that the quantifiable aspects are therefore emphasised.

O'Connor (1996) claims that the learning outcomes approach to curriculum design leads to unacceptable narrowness. This is a result of concentrating on employability, thus it uses the needs of the employer as its rationale, rather than looking at the needs of the graduate. Sloan (2001) has also warned of the danger to academic credibility of overemphasis on employability. However, studies of graduates and students have to indicated that employability is an important attribute when choosing a course (Harvey, Moon & Geall, 1997).

A problem with this is that most measures of employability are simplistic, and do not measure the extent to which graduates are equipped for employment (Harvey, 2001). This is complicated by Harvey & Green's (1994) assertion that employers' views are heterogeneous. Furthermore they suggest that employers have short-term views and there may be a gap between what they say and what they do.

Morley (2001) agrees that employability statistics may be misleading, as less employable groups are also less likely to be in higher education. In addition, many vocational courses produce graduates that take up employment in a different employment sector. This issue is discussed with specific reference to hospitality management in section 4.4. For Morley (2001), emphasising employability of graduates is symptomatic of the reduction in purpose of higher education, that it now produces trained workers rather than educated people. This harks back to the fitness of purpose debate discussed in section 2.2.4.

4.4 Transferable skills and competences

The development of "key", "generic" or "transferable" skills can be seen as an important element in the making of courses of all sorts more vocationally relevant. In fact, Dearing

suggests that they are essential features of higher education courses (Dearing, 1997). Bridges (2000) suggests that the variety of labels used for these skills indicates some conceptual confusion. He points out the direct link made between some of these skills and employment needs in the Dearing report. Bennett, Dunne & Carré (2000), are more critical, suggesting that the semantic confusion surrounding the terms indicates a lack of a conceptual base. However, some authors claim these to be of more importance to employers than specific vocational skills (Harvey, Burrows & Green, 1992b; Ashley *et al*, 1995).

The transferability of skills, and that these skills once acquired self evidently make a positive contribution to employability, are often taken as givens, (Dearing, 1997; Fallows and Steven, 2000). Randall (2002) claims that not only are transferable skills one of the outcomes of higher education, but they are "*transferable readily*". He gives examples from various disciplines in an attempt to prove his point.

However, some authors have questioned this. For example, Billett (2001) claims that transfer of skills between contexts is not easily achieved. Similarly, Holmes (2000) postulates that as learning is contextually based, transferability is limited. He suggests that if this could be demonstrated, it would have far reaching consequences for higher education, both vocational and non-vocational. De la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber (2000) further claim that research has shown that skills cannot be developed without an appropriate context. Levenson (2000) agrees that transferability is problematic. She maintains that using the term generic implies transferability where none may exist. The apparent lack of these transferable skills by graduates, which is claimed by Levenson to be a common complaint of employers, may be in part due to this terminology. She suggests that part of the problem is that these skills are taught and assessed in a context. A more satisfactory approach may be, that being able to demonstrate these skills in one

educational context, might predict the potential for developing them in another context, such as employment.

Hyland (1993) also refutes the idea of transferability of competence across "*broad and heterogeneous areas of occupational practice*". However, this is in marked contrast to Fleming (1991) who proposes the concept of '*metacompetence'* where the individual is able to perform competently in new and unusual situations. He suggests that acquisition of this skill is what higher education is about. He cites as evidence the fact that many graduates recognise the worth of the higher education experience only as they acquire specific job competence and use their metacompetence to cope with these. This view is supported by Eraut (1994), who claims that research has shown that around 70% of management competencies are generic and 30% job specific. This supports the idea that higher education institutions teaching generic management skills may have validity.

A related issue is whether the student has been assessed as possessing the skill in question. This is often referred to as competence. Westera (2001) suggests that competence in higher education is highly problematic. He claims that it is probably only possible to test for the absence of competence in a certain context, rather than its presence. He suggests that competence implies the ability to perform in new uncontrolled situations, but that it can only be assessed in controlled ones. Canning (2000) is similarly critical of competence assessment. He maintains that competence based assessment is often superficial, with little theoretical or conceptual knowledge involved.

Hyland (1993) claims that the word competence has become overloaded. He suggests that other words are more appropriate for some uses connected with the acquisition of skills. For example, "expertise" is more apposite when it refers to occupational competence above the minimum threshold standard.

In order to avoid some of this confusion, the term "learning outcomes" is now more widely used. This also serves to placate some concerns amongst academics, who view the behaviourist approach of the term competencies as too narrow and less appropriate for higher education. The advantage to higher education of learning outcomes as a concept, compared to competence, is that it can encompass a wider range of types of outcomes. However, Pring (1992) suggests that whilst it is possible to specify in vocational areas what should be achieved, this is not nearly so easy to do in the academic domain. Much of the complexity and subtlety has be ignored for this to be done.

The outcomes can range from specific technical skills, to more abstract ideas. The limitation being that it probably needs to be assessed. There are also certain areas, which by definition, are clearly in the realms of subjectivity *e.g.* "*creativity, ethics and values*" (National Council for Vocational Qualifications, 1995). Even Jackson (2000), an advocate of the learning outcomes approach, concedes that only *"most"* curriculum routes can be specified in these terms. He acknowledges that some academics feel that some possible outcomes are too "*complex and interdependent*" to be properly specified, at least in an assessable way. He suggests that the same outcomes will apply to any programme in the subject. However, elsewhere (Jackson, Parks, Harrison & Stebbings, 2000), it is suggested that there may be hybrid programmes that do not meet all learning outcomes. Jackson also claims (2000) that the learning outcomes process is meant to be flexible and to permit diversity, which seems to conflict with the notion of being standardised across similar programmes.

Ashworth (1992) claims that it is a "*serious misunderstanding*" to think that what appear to be clear outcome statements provide greater objectivity, as the subjectivity is in the assessing part. It is probable however, that written explicit statements can be applied more consistently, though never entirely so. However, this probably true only for 'lower

level' competencies, and only if they are very detailed. The linked problem is that the competencies must be directly observable/assessable, which constrains what can be specified (Otter, 1993). This can lead to assessing only of the easily assessable, with consequent distortion of the curriculum and omission of perhaps more important areas.

What might be also be questionable, is the requirement for graduates to show that they have achieved all of the learning outcomes. Eraut (1994) claims the research has found that managers usually have only three competencies (from about twelve) as particular strengths, and these strengths are contributed to an omni-competent team. This need to function as part of a team in most occupations has also been cited by Ashworth (1992) as a criticism of this approach. He suggests that if only competence as an individual is judged, and this may be done from external evidence, then the collaborative teaching and learning experience within higher education institutions begins to falter. This is certainly a pertinent issue as far as hospitality management education is concerned. Team operated events involving a variety of food-service styles are a key feature much valued for a variety of educational (and competence) reasons (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2000). The ability to work in a team is rated highly by employers (Nicholson & Cushman, 2000).

Whether competence should mean simply achieving a threshold level, or that it implies a greater proficiency, is one area of contention linked with the definition. Eraut (1994) quotes a model that has competent as the mid-point of a 5 point scale going from novice to expert. He also quotes the more qualitative approach of a continuum, of just knowing how to do something → knowing how to do it very well, with doing it competently somewhere in between. He suggests that when applied to a job or profession, the word competence implies a reasonable facility above the bare minimum. However, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) view seems to be closer to the

threshold approach (National Council for Vocational Qualifications, 1995). This additionally raises the issue of whether a single jumping of the hurdle, perhaps amongst repeated failures, will suffice. This minimalist approach does not fit well with established practice in higher education, as there is a tradition of differentiation implicit in most British first degree courses, at least in the theoretical parts. The minimalist approach could be more readily encompassed within the practical elements of vocational courses.

Several authors have cautioned against the separation of the knowledge and competence parts when specifying learning outcomes (Otter, 1993; Hyland, 1993). Eraut (1994) further suggests that the determining what is competent has a static quality, which does not take account of rapid changes. Professional groups can be reluctant to modify existing standards as existing group members may know little of the new requirements. This is related to a point made in the discussion of benchmarking in section 3.5.2, *i.e.* the process inclines towards a period of stasis, between relatively infrequent revisions.

A further criticism of the threshold approach is that the only progression from this, is to acquire new competence. Improving on the ones already achieved will not be credited, even though that might be more appropriate (Melton, 1996). This tends to mean that 'higher level' competencies will have more breadth but no more depth, which echoes a common criticism of vocational higher education.

It can be argued that traditional higher education produces potential which, overall and over a career, produces a greater employability than special vocational skills. Non-vocational higher education produces very large numbers of graduates, most of whom become employed. However, courses with vocational relevance are likely to continue to be offered and chosen (Dearing, 1997).

4.5 Hospitality management higher education

An issue to be considered, is the extent to which hospitality management programmes should, and do, differ from other vocational programmes. A key differentiator is the inclusion of elements relating to the practical and operational aspects of hospitality management. This distinguishes the courses from other management courses (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998). Shaw & Nightingale (1995) suggest that the courses should be viewed in much the same light as other professional areas. This means orientating courses towards the industry or profession that they serve. They do however, point out the diversity of subject areas within hospitality management programmes, and the problem of integrating these. Indeed, they suggest that a key part of scholarship in hospitality education is in integrating these disciplines. The research done by Hesketh (2000) suggests, that there might be some features of higher education that could be distinctive to specific industries. Research by the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001), found that hospitality management employers prefer to employ graduates of hospitality management courses. This implies that the employers rate some features of the courses as distinctive and desirable.

One problem facing hospitality management academics is, that without a professional body, which can determine the essential core of any programme leading to "official" professional status, they are left to make the decisions concerning how and what to teach. The two publications that provide a limited direction are the "*Corpus of Management Knowledge*" (Hotel, Catering and International Management Association, 2001), and the "*Unit 25 subject benchmarks*" (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). It is possible to gain corporate membership of the key professional association, the Hotel,

Catering and International Management Association (HCIMA), without any formal qualifications at all, providing sufficient work experience has been acquired. This underscores the importance the industry attaches to experience gained working in the industry, and of possessing practical skills. It also highlights the challenge that those supporting the "broader education" side of the argument have to face.

Pavesic (1993) claims that hospitality management is seen as less academic than other programmes. This leads to a push to improve academic credibility, which in turn makes including vocational skills more difficult. This is exacerbated by the problems and costs involved in the provision of food and beverage practical facilities (Baker, Cattet & Riley, 1995).

Most hospitality management programmes place great reliance on a period of industrial placement. This allows higher education to claim that it puts the gaining of work place skills firmly in the frame of the qualification. However, it exposes the courses to greater scrutiny by those working in the industry. Many of these have not gained academic qualifications, but are now being asked to train those who are in the process of gaining them. In order to continue the system of industrial placements, it is necessary to ensure that the students have sufficient basic operational skills, or are able to rapidly acquire them. A student on placement is typically placed in operational situations, and needs to be able to function in them effectively.

There is a long established tension, between higher education and the hospitality industry, concerning the appropriate skills and knowledge required by a hospitality management graduate (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). The inclusion of operational skills in hospitality management programmes is a key difference compared to *e.g.* generic business degrees (Lashley, 1999). In essence, this becomes a debate about the extent, of practical operational skills or competencies, that should be acquired by the

graduate. By extension, this then encompasses the extent of theoretical knowledge that is appropriate and relevant. The research published by Higher Education Funding Council for England suggests that acquisition of technical skills is of relatively low importance to employers (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). A similar conclusion was drawn by Ashley *et al* (1995). Conversely, Ford and Le Bruto (1995) suggest that practical "hands on" activities are essential in hospitality management courses. They claim that employers tend to indicate that more time should be spent on this. Cullen (1993) in an earlier study of a hospitality management students, found that more practical skills training was suggested as a way of improving the courses. More recently, Quest (1997) has claimed that there is widespread criticism of the academic drift in hospitality management degree programmes. This has meant that teaching practical skills is of lesser importance than academic content. He argues that this is a bad thing, and that practical skills should be given greater prominence.

The major differences between degree level qualifications, and those deemed at a lower level are the intellectual demands, so it unsurprising that academics concentrate on these issues (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). University validation processes are essentially based on academic criteria, and failure to meet the criteria would result in the rejection of a course. However, the Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmarks for Unit 25, do require the academic aspects to be put in an applied context (Quality Assurance Agency, 2000a). Thus, hospitality management academics are navigating a path between the "*Scylla and Charybdis*" of vocational relevance and academic worth, as discussed by van Vught (1995).

To some extent this polarisation can be rationalised, at least from the higher education viewpoint, as a debate about whether higher education should prepare for first destination employment. Alternatively, whether it should be more concerned with giving a grounding

for future senior managers. Powers and Riegel (1993) suggest that less and less middle managers are being required, with more being required of the unit managers as responsibilities are devolved downwards. They explicitly state that hospitality management educators are not in the business of creating senior managers, and that the skills required to be one must be acquired after university. Purcell & Quinn (1996) point out the conflict between education and industry. Industry says education produces poorly prepared graduates with unrealistic expectations, and that practical operational competence is of paramount importance. Educators say that industry recruits in an old fashioned way (Purcell & Quinn, 1996). This is probably irresolvable and points up the conflict that exists in this perennial debate.

Other research has suggested that moving up the career ladder increasingly requires graduate status (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001). In view of the diversity of the industry and the companies within it, a view is that the senior level training is better placed later on in the graduate's career (Powers & Riegel, 1993). However, there is a limited tradition of this, which is hardly surprising considering that a very small proportion of the industry's workforce are graduates compared to other industries. Purcell & Quinn (1996) quote research which suggests that as few as 10% of managers in the hospitality industry are graduates compared to over 40% in all industries combined. Sloan (2001) quotes figures which indicate that in 1999, 5.5% of employees in hospitality management had degrees, compared with an overall 17.9% for all industries.

The debate concerning the generic and specific skills discussed in section 4.3, has also been applied to hospitality management programmes. Johns & McKecknie (1995) suggest that personal and vocational skills should be a part of hospitality management courses. Speaking from an American perspective, Pavesic (1993) suggests that it is essential that hospitality educators develop intellectual skills, such as analytical and

conceptual thinking, in their students, by broadening the curriculum. Lewis (1993), in an article looking forward to the appropriate type of future hospitality management curriculum, emphasises the point about the need to teach general business skills. He suggests that operational skills can be quickly, and more effectively, learnt in the workplace. Hospitality management higher education should be looking to producing leaders who have the vision to find problems, as well as solve them. Course material should be integrated, and related to the wider world of business, developing leadership, inter-personal skills *etc*.. He particularly discusses the use of food service practical work as one area which is inappropriate (Lewis, 1993). In marked contrast, Powers & Riegel (1993) suggest that food service practical plays a critical role, and one which should be developed and emphasised within courses. They suggest that this would provide the appropriate skills - skills which are very similar to those suggested as important by Lewis (1993). That Powers and Lewis teach in the same hospitality management department illustrates the dichotomy which exists, within and between universities, with regard to this area.

The Hotel and Catering Training Company (HCTC) has highlighted that a major issue in the relationship between education and the hospitality industry, is that of supply of appropriately qualified employees. Projections, published by the HCTC, suggest that there will be a shortfall in qualified personnel for the foreseeable future (Hotel and Catering Training Company, 1992). Much of this shortfall at higher education level is due to the mathematics of college places compared to likely industry needs. Moreover, the demand from industry is fuelled by projected expansion of various sections of the industry and by a large turnover of staff with a substantial net loss to the industry. This issue is not restricted to the UK. Pavesic (1993) has noted the same point in the USA, with predictions that the education system is producing only about a quarter of the

qualified people needed as managers each year. Only a quarter of these will gain a four year degree, the approximate equivalent to a British first degree with honours.

However, Purcell and Quinn (1996) found that a large proportion (over 50%) of graduates in hospitality management, felt that they were over qualified for the job they were doing, and did not require their qualifications to do the job. The same study suggested that a high proportion of hospitality management graduates find employment outside the industry, where they are better rewarded.

Such findings fuel the debate between industry and education, with each side blaming the other for what is seen as failure. This highlights an important issue, which is that from academe's viewpoint perhaps they are right in pursuing "higher level" activities. It is the industry which fails to recognise and reward the potential of the high achievers. These are the people who would become the senior personnel in the industry, but for them being "lost" to other industries. In other words, that the industry undervalues hospitality management graduates. From the industry point of view, it suggests that higher education is out of touch and teaching irrelevancies.

It is an interesting reflection of hospitality management and, perhaps all vocational education, that graduates not entering the related industry as seen as a sort of failure. This implies that the main purpose of vocational higher education is to provide specific types of employee. It begs the question - what then is the purpose of non-vocational higher education?

Nevertheless, graduates of non-vocational courses are employed in commercial enterprises. Furthermore, as mentioned above, graduates of vocational courses are employed in enterprises other than the one for which they have been trained. The

assumption must be, that this is because vocationally educated graduates are not available, or prefer to work elsewhere.

It might be expected that market forces would greatly increase demand for vocational courses in the shortfall areas. This is certainly not the case for hospitality management, where applications have been falling for some years. Between the 1996 intake and the 2001 intake, the relevant Higher Education Statistics Agency subject category of *Catering and Institutional Management* experienced a reduction of 12.5% (from 18,110 to 15,845) (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2003). The overall figures for the section, of which *Catering and Institutional Management* is a subset – *Business and administrative studies*- show an 11% increase for the same period (from 200,112 to 246,780). Most of the courses in this section are of a less focussed vocational nature compared to *Catering and Institutional Management* courses. Moreover, courses such as law, with a notoriously poor employment prospect in terms of becoming a lawyer, have an increasing demand, up 16 6% from 54,767 to 63,870 over the same period.

Although it is claimed that hospitality management employers prefer hospitality management graduates, large numbers of graduates from other disciplines also enter the industry (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001).

If one takes the position that the purpose of hospitality management courses is to provide competent managers for the hospitality industry, then the "fitness for purpose" argument would incline to the view that operational skills are a critical part of the courses. However, they are seen to be expensive parts of the courses, and consequently are under pressure from reduced central funding (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998).

4.6 A comparison of benchmarks in some selected vocational subjects

This section examines the QAA benchmarks for a number of vocational subject groups (Quality Assurance Agency, 2003), and makes some comparisons with the benchmarks for Unit 25 (Hospitality, Sport, Leisure and Tourism) which were discussed in section 3.6. The particular focus is to look at practical skills acquisition.

The subjects used for the comparison were:

a) medicine,

b) engineering

which are mainly offered in traditional universities;

c) communication, media, film and cultural studies

d) dance, drama and performance

which are mainly offered in post-92 universities.

These were chosen as examples of subjects where practical skills are required before the individual can operate as a practitioner in the appropriate vocational field.

Three levels are given for the benchmarks for engineering and for dance, drama and performance, as they are for hospitality, tourism leisure and sport. Two levels are given for communication, media, film and cultural studies. For medicine no level is given, but it is noted that all skills are required, thus implying a threshold level. Where three levels are given they are threshold and excellent at the two extremes; and an in-between level variously described as, typical, good or average. For communication, media, film and cultural studies, the two levels are threshold and "focal".

The generic skills are very similar for all subject areas, and in fact are more or less interchangeable. This seems to suggest, that although it proved difficult to determine

any meaningful notion of "graduateness" across higher education (Higher Education Quality Council, 1997), there are similarities across vocational courses.

The most explicit with regard to practical skills are the Unit 25 hospitality specific and the medicine benchmarks. However, all subjects include some competence in practical activities in the benchmarks, at all levels of achievement. The indication is that practical skills are recognised as a part of vocational higher education. It seems that in subjects with a vocational orientation there is a general agreement that practical skills are seen as an important part of a higher education course. However, in most cases there is not an explicit requirement for all students. This may be partly due to the aggregation of subjects with different needs into a single set of benchmarks because of the limited number of subject groupings determined by the QAA.

The difference between hospitality and medicine and the other the subjects is that new graduates are in direct contact with customers/patients and need to able to apply their skills in a very visible way, which can impact heavily on those customers/patients. Where medicine and hospitality part company, is in the fact that newly qualified doctors are closely supervised. Indeed the benchmarks suggest that "*much further training under supervision of senior doctors required*" before the doctor can operate independently. In contrast, hospitality management graduates may need to operate with a high degree of independence soon after graduation. In fact this is the time they are most likely to need operational skills, while they are in junior management positions.

The conclusion, from this brief and limited comparison, is that higher education courses with a vocational orientation require that practical skills be acquired by their graduates. However, the significant difference for hospitality management is that these skills may need to be employed in an unsupervised situation. Moreover, their

application is often in circumstances where a customer directly experience, and are affected by, the competence with which the skills are conducted. Therefore, this may have a consequence in terms of customer satisfaction. It is this fact that distinguishes hospitality management from other vocational courses, and gives skills acquisition during higher education courses extra importance.

4.7 Some recent studies

This section looks at some recent studies that have a similarity to the current research. All these studies were published after the development of the questionnaire for the current study. They were studies examining the perception of skills and attributes of graduates. With one exception (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001), they were not concerned with hospitality management graduates and the emphasis was on generic aspects. A brief synopsis of each study is given.

A comparison with the findings of the current research is given in section 12.2.3.

The studies under discussion are:

a) Nabi & Bagley 1999

b) de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000

c) Hesketh, 2000

d) Nicholson & Cushman, 2000

e) Donald & Denison, 2001

f) Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001

g) Warn & Tranter, 2001

a) Nabi & Bagley 1999

The authors of this study surveyed recent graduates from a range of departments. The graduates were asked about the importance of various generic skills, and how they rated graduate ability in these skills. To ascertain this, a list of the skills was presented, with two five point Likert type scales for each item. Mean scores were computed from these ratings. All the identified skills were rated as being of importance, although there was variation between the various skill importance ratings. In all cases the importance of the skills was rated more highly than graduates' ability in them. Some information technology skills were rated as of the lowest importance.

b) de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000

The skills identified as being important by de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber (2000), were all generic skills, as this was the premise on which the research was based. They were looking specifically at skills that were generic to business graduates. The research, to establish these was a part of a project to improve this aspect of the graduates employability. Once identified, a programme of teaching and assessing these skills was implemented. It may be significant that de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber claimed, that although these generic skills can be identified, they are more likely to be effectively learned in context. This might suggest that although these skills are required across a range of employments, they contain an element of specificity when actually developed.

c) Hesketh, 2000

In a moderate sized study (n=372), Hesketh (2000) focussed on employers' perceptions of graduate's abilities. He used a Likert scale (a three point scale) and asked respondents to rate items for "*importance*" and "*satisfaction*". Hesketh was concerned with how satisfied employers were with the level achieved by graduates.

Hesketh also asked separately about the employers' view of the role of higher education in the delivery of key skills.

Virtually all aspects were rated as more important than appeared to being achieved. Information technology was the only exception, showing a marginal discrepancy the other way.

Hesketh found that the greatest discrepancies were in self-management, teamwork and written and verbal communication. When the item scores were considered, it was the items described as "*vocational preparation*" and "*employment related*" that produced the largest discrepancies for employers.

Hesketh claims that his figures demonstrate that technical skills are not now considered important by employers. However, this seems to be contradicted by another statement, in which he claims that low technical skills is one area causing graduate recruitment problems. Hesketh also claims that employers were generally satisfied with the skill levels of graduates.

In Hesketh's study, it was the consumer services sector that was overall least satisfied with graduates. This sector would be the one to include hospitality management in Hesketh's classification. He suggests that this might be due to its inability to recruit graduates to work in this sector, and that it only marginally falls into the "unsatisfied" criterion. Statistical significance is claimed for this, but the data are not presented in this way.

Hesketh goes on to compare his findings with those identified in the Dearing (1997) report. He suggested that some items emphasised as important by Dearing, were considered less so by his respondents. In particular he claims that numeracy and information technology skills, which Dearing had claimed were inadequate, were not

seen as such by his sample. Conversely Dearing had not mentioned problem-solving, teamwork and self-management, which had been rated strongly by Hesketh's sample.

d) Nicholson & Cushman, 2000

This study was concerned with retailing graduates. In a small study, (n=23), they looked at the difference in perception of academics and employers of the attributes required for graduates. The respondents were asked for their own view, and what they thought the other group would say.

Retail industry employers gave particular emphasis to "*ability to deal with conflict*", "*leadership*" and "*decision making*". Academics highly rated "*understanding of the business environment*" and "*product knowledge*" as well as "*customer service focus*" and "*ability to work as a team*". The academics also thought that the employers would sort the items in a similar way to themselves.

Following a complicated analysis designed to show *"co-orientation"*, Nicholson & Cushman concluded that employers are looking for strong competence in the affective domain, whereas academics value cognitive and interpersonal skills more highly.

e) Donald & Denison, 2001

This study compared student/graduate perceptions of quality, and compared them to the composite data obtained from a range of other stakeholders (n = 93). The comparison was in the form of comparing ranks. The items for inclusion were identified and ranked by means of a three stage Delphi technique. The study looked at students from a wide range of backgrounds, and at various stages in their course (n= 400). This meant that skills required for a specific employment were not included. A five point scale was used which was converted into an overall rank. The student

ranking of items, was compared with the item rankings given by the other stakeholders, using a different scale (six point). This yielded twenty five items concerned with student quality.

The authors suggested that the students viewed themselves more holistically than the other stakeholders. Their view changes as they proceed through the course. A principal components analysis of the data suggested five components. These were labelled by the authors as:

1. generic skills and abilities

2. academic performance

3. employment competence

4. specific skills

5. academic preparedness

The authors concluded that there was a great deal of commonality of views between the students and the other stakeholders.

f) Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001

This report produced by CHME on behalf of HEFCE, is the only study discussed here which directly looks at undergraduate hospitality management education. It was the employers' views that were canvassed. The report was essentially a small study of 28 firms spread across the hospitality industry using an interview technique. It was claimed that added input came from a large annual study of small firms (n=1388). No data were included to allow for independent evaluation, nor was there any indication of how the small firm data were incorporated. The data seem to have been gathered at a senior level, and problems of acquiring the data were noted. The large majority of the

firms appear to have been large or very large, and the personnel interviewed were employed at a senior level.

The HEFCE report states that there was no evidence to suggest a mismatch, between what education is providing, and what the employers are seeking. The report also suggested that technical skills were less important than more general business skills. However, somewhat contradictorily, it also suggested that graduates needed to be able to cope with the *"technical operational complexity of hospitality operations"*. This was said to be particularly important for lower management positions. New graduates are very likely to be occupying those lower positions. Graduates in all industries would be likely to move away from direct operational tasks as they move up the management hierarchy, and so this is not altogether surprising. Consequently, although technical skills were dismissed by the HEFCE report as less important, a different interpretation could have been made. This was that technical skills were important for new graduates, and therefore for undergraduate courses.

The HEFCE report claimed that commercial skills were also important, but it was not entirely clear what is included in this category. It is discussed in the context of distinguishing academic and practical business subjects, and implied that theoretical aspects were less important than practical ones. The HEFCE report also noted concern about over-emphasis on particular sectors, specifically the hotel sector.

g) Warn & Tranter, 2001

This study was based on a degree for intending officers in the Australian military. It looked at *"generic competencies"* the extent to which they correlated with the graduates perceptions of the degree quality, and the extent to which it prepared them for the intended career route.

Two hypotheses were made:

a) that the development of these competencies would be used by the graduates to evaluate the quality of their degree.

b) that the development of the competencies would influence the graduates perception of how well they are prepared for work.

The study used a previously published list, the Mayer list, produced in 1992 as part of the competencies needed by school leavers (Mayer, 1992). Two other aspects were added, as they were felt to be important for graduates: leadership and critical reflective thinking. The implication is that this complete list represents the totality of competencies of any importance for graduates. The authors claim validity for the process of using students to evaluate their own competencies, based on other research studies looking at this aspect.

In general there was little correlation of the competencies with the two criteria. An important finding was that competence development was not perceived as a part of the quality of a degree. This may have been a function of the very specific nature of the courses. However, this very specificity might have been expected to lead to appropriate competence, the non-achievement of which would have a negative affect on quality.

4.8 Summary and conclusions

Vocational education has had an uneasy relationship with higher education. There is a long standing prejudice which accords vocational courses lower status than academic ones.

What is required from vocational higher education is a matter of debate. The spectrum of possibilities ranges from highly job specific skills to generic skills which would be applicable to any job. The latter requires the acceptance of the notion of transferability – that skills acquired in one context can be transferred to another. This is disputed by some authors, although it is widely assumed to be self evidently true. Moreover, research on attitudes to vocational education indicates that the acquisition of generic skills in seen as of fundamental importance by stakeholders.

Hospitality management higher education has to prepare graduates to be managers and supervisors. The nature of the industry also requires graduates to be functioning operatives. Thus skills acquisition is a necessary part of the course. The need to be able to perform skills unsupervised, and in an exposed setting, gives skills acquisition a higher profile than in other vocational courses.

A feature of vocational education is the greater significance of employers as stakeholders compared to non-vocational education. The needs of the employers therefore have more influence. This in turn means that there is even more variation in perception concerning the desirable outcomes of the courses. The vocational perspective also influences the academic staff that teach on them, and the students who have specifically chosen a vocational course in preference to a less obviously vocational one.

The research reported and discussed in the following chapters examined the issue of vocational education in the context of hospitality management, from the perspective of the various stakeholders. The objectives being to address the various facets of the research question outlined in section 1.1.

Chapter 5: Methodology of data collection and analysis

This chapter provides a background to the data collection and analysis methods used in the current research. A brief background to research philosophies is also included. At the end of each section an indication is given as to the use made of this method in the current research. More specific details are given in the relevant chapters.

5.1 Introduction

The starting point for the research was that it may, or may not, be possible to identify a number of features, which can be used to indicate the quality of an hospitality management programme.

The criteria to be used, evolved from the early stages of the research. This meant that the conceptual framework was derived from the sources used in these first stages. This was felt to be important, in view of the highly subjective nature of the notion of quality, as discussed in chapter 2. There was a need to ensure that the researcher's own inclinations and prejudices did not unduly affect the exercise. As this stage provided the framework used later, to generate the survey instrument, it was felt to be important to strive for maximum objectivity. In view of the widely varying perceptions of quality, it also needed to be grounded in the context of the investigation. There are a number of stakeholders in the system, each of whom has a view on what is meant by a quality course in hospitality management. To explore this breadth of view required canvassing opinions which reflected this range.

5.2 Research philosophies

Various philosophies are involved in the classification of research. A major distinction is between inductive and deductive approaches. In very simple terms, inductive

approaches involve gathering data and using it to formulate hypotheses and conclusions. Deductive methods are involved with using the research to test pre-formulated hypotheses. However, these are simplified definitions, and there is often some element of each in any research, (Hammersley, 1996).

The research reported here is essentially of the inductive type. Data were gathered and analysed, in am attempt to produce a view of what would be considered important in determining the quality of a course in hospitality management. However, a starting point was that it might be possible to do this, so there was some element of the deductive method.

A variety of research paradigms, that reflect philosophical positions regarding the nature of research, also exist (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2001). The debates surrounding these paradigms concern a variety of issues, often dichotomies. Two of these issues seem to predominate. One is concerned with the data, and whether they are qualitative or quantitative as discussed in section 5.3. The other concerns the objectivity of the method, and the researcher's intention in interaction with the research. These two issues are linked, in the sense that quantitative data are often seen as more objective than qualitative data.

Bryman (1988) claims a philosophical distinction between the types of research developed, which goes beyond the types of data collected. Indeed, he suggests that although there may be elements of qualitative data in quantitative data research and *vice versa*, there is usually a conceptual difference between the two approaches. However, he does concede that a wide variety of opinion exists with regard to the distinction between the two approaches.

Although some authors make this major philosophical distinction between the two types, Hammersley (1996) questions this, suggesting that it is an oversimplification. He maintains, that despite the claims that the two types represent differing paradigms, this not a tenable position. No method can be truly objective, and qualitative methods can achieve a high measure of objectivity, and much research combines both types of data (Hammersley 1996). Foster & Parker (1995), whilst emphasising the philosophical differences between quantitative and qualitative researchers, also suggest that the two aspects are now often combined.

Marshall (1997) goes further, by suggesting that:

"Early research findings in any area of enquiry are likely to be qualitative in form."(page 28)

He suggests that these can be usefully quantified, to create data that can be more useful for some purposes. Blaxter, Hughes & Tight (2001) endorse this view, suggesting that it is the nature of the research, and the resources available which should determine the procedures. These may be a mixture of techniques, some qualitative, some quantitative. They claim that it is unusual for data to be only of one type.

The same method of collection can be used for both types of data. For example, a survey can collect direct numerical data, in the form of age or salary; or data that can be manipulated numerically *e.g.* responses on a Likert–type scale. However, a survey can also be used to generate responses which are word based, *e.g.* items to be included on a list.

The type of data being collected depends upon the research question, and both types of data can be involved in answering one research question. In the current research, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used. Qualitative methods were used to determine aspects concerned with the quality of hospitality management courses.

Quantitative methods were used to gather and compare information from various stakeholders in the process.

5.3 Types of data and data collection methods

Various sources of data and methods of data collection are discussed. The ones included are those that were considered as possible techniques for the current research.

5.3.1 Documentary sources

Documents are often the starting point for research. They are in any case required to provide a background for the research; and to ascertain what other researchers and authors have written about the topic.

In addition, they can form a part of the data collection. Selection of the documents is of some importance. Few, if any, documents are entirely free from some sort of bias caused by the purpose and method of their production (Finnegan & Thomas, 1993). It is possible to introduce this bias to the research, by selecting documents of a particular type, or that support a particular point of view. Consequently, it is necessary to ensure that an appropriate range of documents is consulted.

Once selected, some sort of content analysis needs to be undertaken. The objective of the content analysis is to reduce the amount of textual material into a much smaller number of categories. Each category represents a particular concept, meaning or idea. (Weber, 1990).

The content analysis can vary in its complexity, from identifying key words, to a detailed contextual analysis of the arguments presented. The type of content analysis is dependent upon the purposes of examining the documents. Thus the analysis allows relevant information to be extracted, in a form that can be utilised later in the research. The use

that is made of the extracted material depends upon the research. It may be used directly, perhaps comparing one document with another, or with another type of material. Alternatively, the material extracted can be used in a further stage *e.g.* in the development of a questionnaire.

A limitation, with many documentary sources, is that they represent the collective view of the interested parties. There may have been a large number of individuals or organisations involved in their production. They often represent the "official" view of public bodies with governmental or quasi-governmental status. Individuals or groups with differing views would have found it difficult to be included in such sources. Journal articles are refereed, and this may mean that in the interest of academic rigour, some views may not be published. A further difficulty is that documents are fixed in time, and the process of their production means that they are rarely truly up to date. Official documents are reviewed, if at all, at infrequent intervals.

In the current research, documentary sources were thought to be of great importance in isolating criteria used by official bodies, such as Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), in evaluating or accrediting higher education. This was felt to be the most effective way, probably the only way, of determining the views of such organisations. It was also possible to tap into previous research using published documents. In most sources the criteria were explicitly stated either as aspects of policy, or as findings from studies. Consequently, documentary sources were used as a significant element of the first stage leading into the questionnaire development discussed in chapter 6.

A list of the sources used in this stage is given in chapter 6.

5.3.2 In-depth interviews

The use of interviews allows in-depth material to be gathered from the interviewee. The interaction, between the researcher and the interviewee, means that issues that are raised can be explored at length. Supplementary questions can help to amplify or clarify points made at a previous stage in the interview.

Interviews can be conducted in a range of formats, depending upon the extent to which the researcher wants to direct the interview. The format represents a continuum, with fully structured at one extreme, and completely unstructured at the other. In the fully structured version, the respondent can only indicate one of the predetermined responses. This can be used as a method of data collection in the form of a face-to-face survey, as discussed in section 5.3.5. The completely unstructured interview rarely, if ever, exists in practice. The researcher has determined the context even in the most unstructured interview (Wilson, 1996).

Further bias can result from the interaction of the interviewer and the interviewee. This can result in the person being interviewed adapting their responses to what they think is acceptable or required (Foster & Parker, 1995).

The data gathered is often primarily qualitative, which makes comparison with other sources more difficult. Such comparison is subjective, and it is not usually feasible to apply any statistical tests, as is possible with quantitative data. Interviews can be used as a preliminary stage to inform later stages in the research, *e.g.* the design of a questionnaire.

Interviews are time-consuming, both in carrying out the interview and in subsequent analysis of the material. Consequently, it is normally only possible to carry out the procedure in a very few cases, in a particular piece of research. This inevitably means that

the range of data is small, and that the material gathered may not be generalisable. Another criticism is that that interviews are subject to bias from the researcher, both in the choice of interviewees, and in the conducting of the interview. In the selection of interviewees, the researcher has to decide whether to look for typical people, ones that have extreme views, ones that represent the maximum range of variation, *etc.*. In many cases it may be a question of taking into account factors such as: convenience, resources (*e.g.* time and costs), and the people who are prepared to be interviewed.

In the current research it was felt that for the main study a broad view and range was needed. The intention was to generate some information, that might be generalisable to programmes in hospitality management. Therefore, interviews were rejected as the prime means of data collection. It was felt that it would not be possible to glean information from a wide enough range of people. However, it was decided that a small number of interviews would be carried out to try to ensure that a range of views were included during the first stages, *i.e.* the selection of the criteria to be used for the questionnaire. A purpose of this was to help to reveal if some criteria became discarded in the process of producing published documents. Details of how these interviews were conducted, and the data utilised, are given in chapter 6.

5.3.3 Case studies

Case studies, looking at individual examples, can be used to provide detailed information concerning the area under scrutiny. Their use provides an in-depth treatment, and can more fully explore the area than is possible with other methods. They allow the way that various aspects interrelate to be explored within a particular context. The data that are gathered can be quantitative or qualitative, reflecting the broad perspective that is possible with this approach. A number of the techniques described here could be used in a case study, albeit on a small scale.

However, case studies are time-consuming. Consequently it is normally only possible to carry out the procedure in one, or at most a very few, cases. Many of the criticisms of interviews also apply to case studies. Thus, the range of information is limited by the resource constraints, and the material gathered may not be generalisable. The problem of bias in data collection and in the selection of cases is also similar to that of interviews. This is exacerbated by the very small number conducted.

There is marked heterogeneity of people and organisations both within and between stakeholder groups in the current research. Consequently, it was considered that the much more restricted range of views, that could have been realistically gathered using case studies, would have been inadequate. The diverse and fragmented nature of the hospitality industry might have meant that specific criteria emerged, which had little general applicability

5.3.4 Observational research

Observation techniques can provide data not collectable in any other way. Rather than collecting information on how people think, or at least say, they react; it is possible to observe what they actually do in given situations.

However, the process of observing may distort what is happening, if the people being observed are aware that they are being watched. It is difficult to know if people are acting as they would if they were unobserved. Observing people without their knowledge raises major issues of practicalities and ethics.

Observation is a time consuming process and consequently it shares disadvantages with other time intensive methods. That is, the very limited range of situations that can be examined within a reasonable time scale. In addition, perhaps more importantly, observational research lends itself to the analysis of behaviour, and is less appropriate for

the study of *e.g.* attitudes. Attitudes can only be inferred from the observed behaviour. This adds to the possibility of bias that already exists because of the same issues of selection *etc.* noted for previous methods.

Observational research was considered unsuitable for investigating the current research question, partly for the same reasons as case studies *i.e.* the limited range of opinion that could be canvassed. In addition, the current research was primarily concerned with attitudes which observation is ill-suited to gauge.

5.3.5 Surveys

These methods have the advantage that they allow data to be collected from a wider range and number of respondents than is possible with other methods. These can then be subjected to some comparative analysis. It is therefore possible, at least in some circumstances, to make comments and generalisations that are applicable beyond the immediate area of the research (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001). The data collected are frequently quantitative which allows aggregation across a large number of respondents. A variety of different analyses, including statistical analysis, can be undertaken on the data. However, qualitative data can also be collected by means of a survey.

When considering who will take part in the survey, it is rarely possible to include the whole population of interest. This would normally require more time and financial resources than are available. Therefore, nearly always, some form of sampling has to be used. The two basic methods are probabilistic and non-probabilistic. In the probabilistic methods, every individual in the sampling unit has to have an equal chance of being selected by random measures. In contrast, in the non-probabilistic methods, the individuals selected are chosen in such a way that selection is not random.

Probabilistic methods are preferable from the point of view of estimating errors *etc.*. However, in many contexts they are not possible. Access to the entire population of the sampling unit is often not available, or may be logistically impossible to achieve. If the population contains a number of sampling units *e.g.* subgroups, a stratified sampling method ensures adequate representation from each unit. Each subgroup is considered a separate population, and an appropriate sampling method to select from within this group is chosen.

The survey can be in various forms such as self-completion questionnaires, or questionnaires that form the basis for structured interviews, either face to face or by telephone. Self-completion questionnaires have the advantage that they can be widely disseminated relatively cheaply, and sampling methods can reduce the possibility of bias in the selection of the respondents.

Structured interviews ensure a high response rate and quotas can be achieved by selecting suitable respondents until the quota is reached. Structured interviews limit the number of respondents and also mean that only people who can be contacted directly can be included. There may also be problems with interviewer/interviewee interactions as discussed in section 5.3.2.

Self-completion questionnaires often suffer from a low response rate. This means that a large number of respondents need to be contacted, to ensure an adequate sample size. Follow up strategies can be used to reduce the non-responses. As the researcher is not present, any ambiguity can result in erroneous data being collected, although careful piloting should significantly reduce this problem.

Another significant disadvantage of questionnaires, is that they do not lend themselves to exploration of any depth, beyond the range initially determined by the researcher

(Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001). It is also not possible to follow up and clarify points made by individual respondents. Although free responses can be permitted to overcome some of this disadvantage, the analysis of these responses can be overwhelmingly time-consuming in a large survey. In any case they are usually limited, and subject to interpretation by the researcher. No method of research is entirely free of the values of the researcher. However, surveys can be designed to reduce subjectivity.

The way in which the questions are determined is important, as are the responses if these are chosen from a pre-determined list. There is a real possibility of bias from the researcher. It is necessary to devise the questions in a way that minimises this risk, and to try to elicit indications of bias in the pilot stage. Similarly, care is necessary that the administrative procedure used in not unintentionally distorting the results (Wilson, 1996).

A survey was determined to be the most appropriate method of data collection for the main study. When considering the method to be used for the main data collection, it was felt that in view of the subjective nature of quality it was important to allow a broad range of views to be represented. It was decided that a self-completion questionnaire would be the best instrument to facilitate this. Using this procedure, it was possible to canvass opinions from amongst various stakeholder groups. This had the additional advantage, that it allowed some comparisons to be made between the responses given by the various groups.

5.3.6 Survey sampling procedure

In view of the heterogeneity of the target groups a variety of sampling procedures was required.

It was clear that sampling had to be on a stratified basis. This was to ensure that each group considered important was adequately represented in the sample. The stratification was necessary to compare the responses from the various stakeholder groups

It was not possible to employ a proportionate method, in view of the very large differences in the numbers and accessibility of the various target groups. Although it was not possible to ascertain precise figures, it was estimated that the number of final year students on hospitality management courses was between 2,000 and 3,000 (Higher Education Funding Council for England. 1998), the number of academic staff between 400 and 500 (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1998; Universities Central Admissions Service, 1998). Barfe (1998) reported over 102,000 hospitality businesses in 1997.

A non-probabilistic cluster sampling was decided upon for the student group. For the staff and employers groups a probability design was considered the most appropriate. The details of these are discussed below.

Within this framework, circumstances dictated that opportunity sampling was used within each stratum, in common with much similar research (Schofield, 1996). The use of opportunity sampling within each group derived from the fact, that respondents were being asked to give time and effort, to complete a questionnaire that was of little or no benefit to them. This inevitably introduced the possibility of bias into the results. This bias could have been in either direction, *i.e.* people who were particularly positive or negative towards hospitality management education. An attempt was made to minimise the risk of bias by the sampling method, and by following up non-returns as far as possible. In addition, all respondents were asked to indicate if they would like to receive a summary of the results. This was to try to intimate that they might benefit personally.

As the main focus of the research was hospitality management, it was decided that for academic staff, data would be solicited from the staff of UK universities currently offering degree programmes in hospitality management. In order to limit bias, it was decided to use all departments for which a staff list was available. The sources used were the Commonwealth Universities Yearbook 1998 (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1998), and of those of the 40 universities, listed in the Universities Central Admissions Service (UCAS) 1999 handbook (Universities Central Admissions Service, 1998), which offered hospitality management courses, and that had posted staff lists on their websites. This yielded around 340 names.

For administrative staff, as no names were available, it was decided to send questionnaires to "The Administrator, Hospitality Management" to the 40 universities listed in the UCAS handbook.

These methods were not available for use with students. Consequently, in order to facilitate the logistics it was decide to sample final year hospitality management students from three university departments offering hospitality management degree programmes. This gave a target sample of around 300. Final year students were chosen, because it was felt that they would have adequate knowledge of the whole course, and that it was not until students had reached this stage that they would be able to make a useful evaluation. The lower proportion of the total population than was used for the staff was considered justified, in view of the greater homogeneity of the group compared to the staff who have joined hospitality management departments by a variety of routes and from a number of disciplines.

In order to solicit the views of graduates who had graduated relatively recently, it was decided to use the alumni database of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). Although this is an

incomplete and possibly biased list, as graduates opt to be included on the database, it offered the only feasible way of contacting this group. Approximately 90 names were on the list.

In view of the very large and diverse nature of the industry noted earlier, it was clear that it would be necessary to limit the number of employers sampled. A method of selection was required. It was felt unrealistic to attempt any conventionally acceptable statistical sampling from this number. Accordingly, a selection was made from the database of companies which had been used for industrial release by MMU for the last three cohorts of students, *i.e.* since the current database system had been established. This comprised some 220 businesses, ranging from the very small with just a few employees, to the large multinational chains. Given the earlier statistics from Barfe (1998), this is obviously a very small proportion of the total. However, it yielded a manageable number of employers to contact, which covered a wide range of hospitality businesses with some knowledge of hospitality management courses, and all appropriate details were available. It was recognised that there was the possibility of bias in this procedure as nearly all the employers chosen would have had a reasonably positive relationship with MMU. However, three factors were felt to justify this method:-

a) The large and rapid turnover of staff in most hospitality management operations means that even though the establishment is the same, the staff responding may not have been involved. Choosing alternative establishments may have meant that staff had been involved with MMU anyway.

b) The cooperation of the establishments was required, and those with some positive relationship with MMU would be more likely to respond.

c) Some understanding and experience of graduates was necessary for meaningful responses to be made to the questionnaire. By definition, industrial release placement employers would fall into this category

5.4 Data analysis in the current research

A variety of types of data analysis was used in different stages of the research. This was necessary, to allow the appropriate analysis to be used to elicit the required information. The methods used included both qualitative and quantitative types.

In brief, the methods used were:

a) content analysis

b) analysis of means. In addition to straightforward calculation of the means and adjustment to avoid extraneous effects, a number of specific statistical tests were used:

i) analysis of variance (ANOVA)

ii) Kruskal-Wallis

iii) Tukey

c) factor analysis

These are discussed in more detail in the relevant section of chapters 6, 9 and 10. An outline of the factor analysis procedure is described in appendix III.

5.5 Validity and reliability

5.5.1 Introduction

Validity and reliability are always an issue in any research of the type reported here.

In summary, validity is concerned with whether the measures are appropriate and are measuring what they purport to be measuring. Reliability is concerned with whether the measures are accurate and reproducible.

5.5.2 Validity

Validity is always a problem in any sort of research concerned with attitudes *etc*.. This usually comes to down to a trade-off, between various competing factors, that depend on the particular circumstances of the research (Wilson, 1996).

It was decided that face validity could be assumed, as all the sources used were related to higher education. The first stage of the work had identified appropriate criteria from a wide variety of sources, and similar items were noted from the various sources examined. Piloting had confirmed their appropriateness. It was also felt that the criteria related to the theoretical aspects of the notion of quality discussed earlier. Therefore some claim of construct validity, as defined by Oppenheim (1992) and Hedrich, Bickman & Rog (1993), could be made.

The preliminary analysis reported in chapter 8 indicated a positive skew on the ideal scales. This suggested that from the perspective of the stakeholders surveyed the items identified were considered valid aspects of the topic under consideration.

In the research in question it was recognised that it was not possible to achieve statistical validity, because of the non-feasibility of achieving an appropriate sample in statistical terms. As discussed above, this research shares the same problems as much survey research. That is, opportunity sampling was the only feasible way of obtaining the relevant data - only those people willing to respond could be surveyed. It was assumed for the purposes of the discussion, that the results were representative of the various stakeholders, at least of those stakeholders who were interested in the aim of the research.

The major problem was with the employer group. The hospitality management industry is so very large and diverse, that it was recognised that it was unrealistic to attempt a statistical sample. However, not all the industry sees itself as being involved with

graduates. Consequently, it was felt that including those employers with which the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at MMU has contact, would provide a broad range of employers, who have a stake in hospitality management graduates. This is partly a function of the large size of the Department, and length of time that hospitality management courses have been established.

It was felt that because of the nature of the research, and because the responses were asking about individual attitudes to which there was not a "right" or "politically correct" answer from people who did have a stake, then some reliance could be put on the responses. At least some of the possible difficulties of people adjusting their answer were therefore avoided (Wilson, 1996). Therefore it was felt that the context of the research was such as to provide validity in terms of the responses received (Wilson, 1996).

The assumption that the Likert scales used were interval scales, is discussed briefly in section 8.4. Although there are some statistical validity problems with this; it is a common pragmatic approach, and is usually judged acceptable providing its limitations are noted (Oppenheim, 1992; Calder, 1996).

5.5.3 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the reproducibility of the research. If it is not feasible to repeat the survey to test whether similar responses would be achieved, only a limited amount of checking for reliability is possible. The following methods can be used to give an indication of reliability.

A Cronbach's alpha value can be calculated as a measure of internal reliability. A value $\geq$ 0.8 is considered evidence of internal reliability (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). As part of the analysis it was possible to calculate the affect of deleting any of the items on the alpha value.

Some of the items covered an aspect related to another item. For example, one item asked for opinions concerning the ability of the graduates to speak a language other than English; another asked opinions of whether a foreign language should be part of the subject content. Similar responses would be expected for related items if respondents were responding consistently.

Items that appear to have a direct connection could be expected to appear in the same component produced by the factor analysis. This would act as further confirmation that consistent responses were being given.

The application of these measures to the current research data is reported in the appropriate sections.

5.6 Summary of methodology

In the current research it was felt that as a major requirement was to canvass widely, and then to make comparisons between the stakeholder groups, the survey approach was the most suitable. It allowed a broad range of respondents to be included but still be manageable. Consequently a self-completion questionnaire was chosen as the way to investigate the quality criteria derived from the initial stages. These initial stages involved gathering information from documentary sources and from the interviews as discussed above.

Methods used for the analysis of the data were those considered most useful in understanding the research question. The majority of the analyses were quantitative in nature.

Chapter 6: Questionnaire development

This chapter describes the procedures followed in the development of the questionnaire used later in the research. A brief comparison of the questionnaire with the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark statements, that were published subsequently, is also given.

6.1 Documentary sources

The first stage involved determining, from a range of documentary sources, items that could be considered important in the quality of hospitality management programmes in higher education.

As the documents were relatively few (see later list), and their format varied, it was decided that there would be little advantage in using a computerised database. Consequently a manual system was organised.

It was recognised that however "official" reports are, they are often written by a very narrow group, who do not necessarily command widespread support, and are in any case influenced by various political and outside influences (Finnegan & Thomas, 1993). To try to guard against this as much as possible, a wide range and type of documentary sources was used for this part of the work. Some of these were considered primary data, and others secondary data. Specifically, the reports from Government agencies and the external validating bodies were considered as primary sources. The others were in the main secondary sources. However, some of the published work (*e.g.* Harvey, Burrows & Green, 1992a,b,c; Yorke, 1996) reports on primary research.

The sources used were:

1. *Meeting competence needs in the hotel and catering industry.* Hotel and Catering Training Company (1992)

2. Quality in Higher Education Project. (Harvey, Burrows & Green, 1992)

3. *Indicators of programme quality.* A project report prepared for the Higher Education Quality Council; originally commissioned by the Council for National Academic Awards. (Yorke, 1996a)

4. *Threshold and other academic standards.* (Higher Education Quality Council, 1996a)

5. *Graduates' Work: Organisational change and students' attributes.* (Harvey, Moon, & Geally with Bower, 1997)

6. Manchester Metropolitan University *Handbook of Quality Assurance:* internal quality assessment literature, which is heavily based on Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) material. (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1998).

7. *Review of hospitality management.* (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 1998)

These documents were subjected to a simple content analysis. This allowed the identification of items that seemed to be associated with producing a course of appropriate quality. However, the documents were not critically examined, beyond drawing out factors. The objective was to generate items for the questionnaire. The validity of the criteria identified in them was tested at a later stage via the questionnaire.

As a result of this process, a preliminary list of items to be included in the questionnaire was assembled.

Subsequent to the completion of the main study, a further important document was published. This was the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education subject benchmarks for this area (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). A comparison of this document with the questionnaire devised for the current study was made, and is reported in chapter 11.

6.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted as a way of helping to ensure that the views of people involved in vocational courses, such as hospitality management courses, were included. This was thought to be important, as most of the documents were external to the process. The internal documents were generic, and so not specifically related to hospitality management or vocational courses.

6.2.1 Selection of interviewees

Four semi-structured interviews, and one focus group, were conducted covering people with a range of perspectives from the Hollings Faculty of Manchester Metropolitan University. The interview method was chosen, as it seemed to offer the best prospect of obtaining a range of views directly. The nature of the information is that it is subjective and largely implicit, *e.g.* in terms of course design and delivery, or of student experience. This makes its identification difficult except by directly asking individuals.

The interviewees' backgrounds were:

a) A research student in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department - she was a graduate of the Department, and had spent some time working in the hospitality industry before returning to embark on a research degree.

This interview acted as a pilot for the others, in terms of the procedures, topics and transcription. The data gathered was however amalgamated with the data from the other interviews.

b) A senior member of the Hollings Faculty administrative staff who had several years experience of educational administration, following some time working for an accountancy firm.

c) A member of the academic staff of another department in Hollings Faculty. She was one of the newest members of the Faculty academic staff, having been working in local industry for several years prior to joining the university. The department for which she worked is exclusively involved in delivering vocational degrees.

d) A student in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department who had just completed his degree, and who had been offered employment with a major international hotel company.

e) A focus group discussion/interview with five members of the academic staff of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Department.

Interviewees and the focus group members were people who had volunteered following a request for participants. This was achieved by an invitation to participate via a letter through the internal mail, and via the students' noticeboard.

It was decided to limit the interviews to individuals from the Hollings Faculty. This simplified the logistics, and it did not trespass on the good will of other possible participants, whose co-operation would be required in later stages of the research. It was felt that this did not compromise the validity of the interview stage, as this was involved in ensuring the inclusion of suitable factors. Several of the documentary sources were

related to industry aspects One of the interviewees had very recently joined the Faculty from industry, and several of the focus group had extensive industrial experience, both as participants and consultants, and one was the industrial placement tutor. Consequently the selection of the respondents, together with the other sources, included the range of perspectives likely to be significant in hospitality management higher education provision (Oppenheim, 1992).

It was felt that a reasonable compromise had been achieved between breadth and resources. The use of colleagues was also felt to be useful, as it avoided to a large extent some of the possible difficulties of interviewees "saying the right thing" (Jones, 1985). This was thought to improve the validity of this part of the research, as it diminished the inter-personal "negotiation" which is a feature of any interview (Wilson, 1996). There was the possibility of bias in the selection of the interviewees, however as the interviews were only a part of this stage of the research, it was decided that any bias would be remedied by the other data sources used.

6.2.2 Structure of the interview

As it was important to gather ideas of possible items from a wide perspective, it was decided that an relatively unstructured format was the most appropriate, bearing in mind that there is no such thing as a completely unstructured research interview (Jones,1985; Wilson, 1993). Consequently a checklist approach was used. This ensured that the areas previously identified from the documents were included, even though the interviewee was significantly influencing the progress of the interview. This allowed the researcher to shape the interview to some extent, but still to keep towards the unstructured end of the continuum (Wilson, 1996). As the researcher conducted all the interviews, this was felt to provide reasonable consistency (Oppenheim, 1992).

In practice, only a limited amount of direction was needed, following the initial introduction. Even less direction was required for the focus group. There was some element of self-correction, in that if the discussion seemed to be moving away from the point of the research, someone would comment on this and bring the discussion back. This accords well with the advantages claimed for focus groups by Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinsgub (1996), who suggest that these include *"synergy, snowballing, stimulation, security and spontaneity*".

Within this loose structure, a sort of "funnel technique" was used (Frey & Oishi, 1995). Each interview began with a very general question, asking what the interviewee thought identified "quality" in higher education. Subsequent interviewer intervention guided the respondents to consider more specific areas either generated by their own comments or using the checklist.

All the participants were aware of the nature of the research before the interview, as the initial requests were accompanied by a brief description of the research proposal. This was felt to be necessary, so that the participants understood the rationale of the research. The preliminary material supplied, also helped ensure that the situation did not develop where the interviewees were trying to guess the "appropriate" answers. According to Jones (1985), this is a real possibility when respondents are not properly briefed. It also helped to give the interviewees more of a feeling of being involved in the research. This was emphasised, by assuring the interviewees that it was their views that were being sought and valued.

All the interviews were recorded on audiotape. Very brief notes were also taken, mainly as annotations to the checklist mentioned earlier. This allowed monitoring of the progress of the interview.

The four interviews were each of approximately 45 minutes duration. The focus group session lasted approximately 90 minutes. Each tape was reviewed and transcribed as soon as possible. The pilot interview revealed that, although the very simple recording equipment (a "Walkman") used was quite adequate, care need to be taken to ensure that the interviewee was in reasonable proximity to the recorder with its built-in microphone. For the focus group , a more sophisticated type of recorder, using a tabletop remote microphone, was used. This allowed the much more obtrusive recording apparatus to be moved outside the group circle, but still produced a high quality recording.

All participants said they were happy to be recorded, and the process did not appear to affect the responses given. Following the recorded part of the interview, *i.e.* once the recorder had been turned off, participants were asked if there were any further unrecorded comments which they wished to make, but none were forthcoming.

6.2.3 Interview analysis

Initially, it was intended to produce an exact transcription of each interview for further analysis, including hesitations *etc.*, as suggested by Jones (1985). This was to reduce the possible distortions that can occur with tape transcriptions (Finnegan & Thomas, 1993). However, it was realised during the transcription of the pilot interview, that this was much more time-consuming and did not produce additional useful information. It was general ideas of factors, not subtleties of individual responses that required to be noted. Boulton & Hammersley (1996) confirm that exact transcriptions are not necessary. Consequently, it was decided to restrict the transcription, whilst still ensuring all words were noted. Additionally, for the focus group, the speaker was identified, and where any comment received confirmation from other participants, this was also noted. The researcher carried out all transcription.

The transcriptions were subjected to a simple content analysis, to screen for references to quality aspects. No evaluation of the factors was attempted, and any unclear points were included. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data before any judgement was needed (Swift, 1996)

6.3 Questionnaire development

Items derived from the analysis of the interviews, were added to the original list of items drawn from the documentary sources. The items identified from the literature and the interviews, were put into appropriate meaning categories (Kvale, 1996). These categories were initially derived from the literature, in particular from the HEFCE documents, and then expanded as necessary to include the comments. There was no attempt to limit the number of categories, so as to allow the emergence of any that were unexpected (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996). Consolidation of closely related items was carried out, but the final number arrived at was determined by the number of items which emerged, rather than any predetermined figure. Given their derivation, these items could be considered as related to the quality of hospitality management programmes at the higher education level. These items were then included in the questionnaire.

Having established the items to be included, the style of the questionnaire had to be determined. Broad questions, with a more or less free response, were rejected except in a few restricted cases. This was partly because of the subsequent data management, and partly because of the need to have a consistent basis for comparison between the groups. It was decided that this could be best achieved by soliciting the same information in a standardised way. A further disadvantage is that a free response questionnaire is more demanding of the respondent, and may therefore reduce the response rate and/or the accuracy of the responses. This may add to any bias resulting from the use of a self-completion questionnaire.

The survey was intended to measure attitudes, in the sense that respondents were being asked to indicate the extent to which each item was an important quality indicator for them. Consequently, it was decided that the rating scale format as described by Oppenheim (1992), was the most appropriate style of instrument to use, with the scales being employed to elicit the degree of agreement. A further major advantage of the scale approach was that the format of each question could be similar. This helped to minimise the physical size of the questionnaire as well as to facilitate its completion (Wilson, 1996)

A criticism of this sort of scale is that the same overall score can be achieved in different ways. However, in this case, the overall score was not important, as it was how each individual item was judged that was of interest.

The questionnaire was designed in the form of a series of 90 specific items, derived from the documentary sources and the interviews. Each of the items was accompanied by a 5-point scale, on which the respondents could indicate the importance that they attributed to them. A five point scale was deemed the most suitable, as it was desirable to be able to ascribe a value to each item which could be compared across the stakeholder groups. The use of continuous scales was also considered but it was decided that these were not so appropriate in this case. This was partly because it was thought that it would be very difficult to give some sort of numerical value as to the importance of the items on a continuous scale. This would be especially true as there were a significant number of them. So employing five point scales was using a more "user-friendly" approach as far as the respondents were concerned. In any case, values can be gleaned by assuming equal intervals on the scales.

It is possible to assume that the points on the scale represent equal intervals and thus carry out some numerical processing (Calder, 1996). This type of scale allows the objectifying of subjective data and for easier comparison between groups. The five point scale allowed

respondents to give some emphasis to their agreement or disagreement about the inclusion of a particular item, without being pressed for excessively fine judgements.

Consequently, a five point scale ranging from "extremely important" at one extreme in five stages to "no importance" at the other accompanied each specific item. Only the extremes of the scale were labelled, to avoid any possible distortion or ambiguity in the terms used for the intermediate points.

This questionnaire was used for the pilot study. Subsequently, an additional scale was added to each item, as described in the section 7.5.

6.4 Comparison of the questionnaire with the QAA benchmark statements

A tabular comparison is given in chapter 11, a discussion of the benchmark statements was given in section 3.6. These benchmark statements were produced subsequent to the administering of the questionnaire.

The components listed in the benchmarks were almost all listed in the questionnaire in some form. The terminology is sometimes different, and the aggregation or disaggregation of subjects also varies. The only general exception to this inclusion was the item *"the hospitality consumer and the service encounter"*. This was not included specifically in the survey, as it was considered axiomatic that in courses dedicated to a service industry, consumer and service aspects were involved at all levels.

The only two omissions in the questionnaire, as listed in the specific subjects were "*entrepreneurship*" and "*design and planning*". The meaning of entrepreneurship in this context is rather obscure. The summation of many of the other subjects seems to include this. The design and planning item also seemed ambiguous, and seems to be two separate issues, which were not identified as separate items in the discussions and

literature leading to the production of the survey for the current research. Planning is considered to be an integral part of management, and adding the word "*design*" is a somewhat tautological addition to describe what is essentially the same process. Alternatively, design could be interpreted as the creation of aesthetic an/or functional plans for buildings, décor *etc.*. This was not raised by any respondent in the preliminary phase, and consequently was not itemised in the questionnaire. It seems something too specialised for all hospitality management graduates to undertake.

Hospitality management operational skills are not mentioned directly in the subject benchmark statements. However, they are implicit in the inclusion of "*food and beverage production and service*". In the subject specific guidelines for the hospitality sector, it is suggested that hospitality graduates would be in a position to gain NVQ4 "*soon after graduation*". This strongly implies that a good deal of skills acquisition must take place during the course.

Chapter 7: Pilot study

This chapter describes the piloting process that was used, how the sample was selected, and indicates what changes were made as a result of the pilot stage.

7.1 Introduction

All aspects of the survey were piloted. This included the delivery and recovery of the questionnaires; as well as extracting the data for further analysis and examining the responses for any apparent problems. The pilot also helped to ensure the salience of the criteria by including a non-response category. In addition, the respondents were sent a separate comment sheet asking them to make specific remarks on any aspect of the questionnaire. This was to help to facilitate the identification of any difficulties encountered during the completion.

7.2 Pre-pilot stage

Initially a pre-pilot stage was used. As far as possible, it was necessary to cover the range of reactions and responses that could be encountered in the subsequent stages (Wilson 1996). No attempt was made to be statistically representative or even proportionate to the numbers expected in the actual pilot or survey. Ascertaining the range of possible responses was an important aspect of the pre-pilot. In addition, it was hoped to reveal any particular ambiguities in any part of the questionnaire, or difficulties with the procedures.

The pre-pilot responses were solicited from each of the categories of stakeholders involved with hospitality management courses at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). These were five employers, three final year MMU students, two members of MMU academic staff, plus an administrator. In addition, one person from another university department offering hospitality management courses, and one person who was

involved with developing the (Hotel Catering International Management Association (HCIMA) material on the content of hospitality management courses, were also used in this stage. They were contacted previously to ensure their willingness to help, and sent the questionnaire by post, with a return envelope. The MMU people were given the questionnaire personally and asked to return it directly to the researcher. This procedure meant that members of all the stakeholder groups to be surveyed, were asked to complete and comment on the questionnaire in its pilot form.

Following the pre-pilot, which had indicated no particular problems, a pilot stage was carried out. This was an essential part of the process (Oppenheim, 1992), as it helped to ensure that the format of the questionnaires, the criteria chosen and the procedures planned for the main study were likely to result in the collection of useful data. There was therefore an opportunity to rectify any areas causing problems before too many resources had been expended.

7.3 Questionnaire distribution and collection

For the pilot stage, 10% of the identified sample was used for the administrative staff, the academic staff and the employers. These were chosen by numbering the list, and then using random numbers generated by Excel to select the pilot sample. For the students, one group of final year MMU students were selected at random, this comprised 15 students. Another 16 were sent to a colleague at another institution who had offered to cooperate.

The questionnaires were numbered before delivery. This was necessary to keep track of the number of responses received from each stakeholder group. Where possible, numbers were matched with the respondents so that it was possible to "chase up" individual non-responses. In view of this, anonymity was not desirable as far as the researcher was

concerned. However, the respondents were assured of confidentiality, and that any comments made would be attributed only to the stakeholder group to which the respondent belonged. No information would be published which would allow any possibility of identification of the individual. For the student group, following up of non-respondents was not considered feasible. Students from institutions other than MMU had to be contacted via a colleague in that other institution, as direct access was not permitted.

All the people, to whom the questionnaire was given, were also given information as to the purpose of the study. The method of distribution and collection varied with the stakeholder group. For the external respondents, standard mail systems were used for both delivery and collection. Pre-paid return envelopes were provided. Telephone reminders were used when appropriate and necessary. Internal questionnaires were distributed personally, and collected either personally, or via the researcher's "pigeonhole", or the department office.

Identifiable non-respondents were contacted by telephone if possible, otherwise by letter, to try to encourage them to respond. A further copy of the questionnaire was sent if requested, and was automatically sent to those non-respondents who could not be contacted by telephone.

Table 2 shows the response rate for the pilot study

Table 2: pilot study response rate[1]

Group	**numbers sent out**	**returned**	**percentage return**
Administrative staff	4	3	75
Academic staff	26	13	50
Employers	22	11	50
Alumni[2]	9	4	44
Current students MMU	15	15	100
Current students other university	16	8	50

[1] overall after second mailing
[2] one response from a parent to say the alumnus was travelling abroad

7.4 Pilot data analysis

The pilot survey set out to try to gauge the attitude of various stakeholders to the inclusion of the various, previously identified, components in the quality criteria of hospitality management programmes. The respondents were by definition stakeholders, and had some involvement in the system. Consequently, the creation of a large item pool, testing and scaling *etc.*, as suggested in Oppenheim (1992), was considered inappropriate. It was felt that elaborate sifting of the possible items, via a separate preliminary survey, was unnecessary and unjustified. This was further justified by the fact that, the items for inclusion in the survey had been gleaned from the same stakeholder groups, and/or from various related official documents. The latter have been the subject of debate, and establish the current official position, concerning what are the important quality aspects of higher education hospitality management courses. This meant that the list of items was bound to be relevant to the various groups, as this followed from their method of generation.

Therefore, any significant negative views of items, would be key aspects of the results. Thus, they would need to be verified by analysis of the whole sample, rather than be rejected by the small number in the pilot sample.

A data frame was set up using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, in preparation for the data entry. This allowed for later analysis by stakeholder group, *etc.*. The data were linked to the numbered questionnaires from which they were gathered. These had been assigned in such a way that the stakeholder group to which each belonged could be identified (Swift, 1996). The frame allowed "no opinions" to be recorded, and also allowed for missing values to be identified (Oppenheim, 1992). It was decided that as for the most part it involved noting which number on the scale that the respondent had indicated, there would be no advantage in any sort of coding system.

Additionally, this would involve another stage with a corresponding increase in the possibility of error of transcription. Consequently, the five point scale data were inputted into the data matrix as a numerical score for each item for each respondent. Extra numbers were assigned to indicate a "no opinion" response, or missing data. A tentative coding was developed for the open ended questions. The trial process of data entry indicated that it was a manageable if somewhat time-consuming procedure.

Some simple analysis m was carried out to ensure that the data were suitable. This consisted of frequencies, and means. This revealed that all of the means suggested a positive skew towards the "important" side of the scale.

7.5 Modifications made following the pilot study

The preliminary analysis indicated that all the items had been given a positive rating; mostly well above the mid-point of the scale. As a consequence, it was decided that additional information could be gathered by adding another scale to each item. The first scale was labelled "ideal", for respondents to indicate how important they thought that item was to the quality of the courses. The second scale was labelled "actual", and was designed to allow respondents to indicate their perceptions of how important the various items were, as manifested in graduates and courses. The two scales were clearly differentiated to avoid any possible confusion, but were otherwise identical.

A small-scale pilot with two academic staff, one alumni and one student, indicated that there were no difficulties with the additional scale. In fact, it was considered an improvement. Consequently, it was decided that this format would be used for the main study *i.e.* each item would be accompanied by two scales, one labelled "ideal", and one labelled "actual". A copy of the final questionnaire resulting from this amendment can be seen in appendix I.

Chapter 8: Main study

This chapter briefly explains the methodology employed for the main study data collection, and outlines the analyses used.

8.1 Summary of procedures

The questionnaire, devised as described in chapter 6, and modified by the addition of the additional "actual" scale, as described in chapter 7, was used. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix II. The procedures noted in chapter 7, for the distribution and collection of the pilot study, were replicated for the main study. The sample used for the administrative staff, the academic staff, and the employers, were the names remaining after the pilot study names had been removed. For the students, the final year students on hospitality management courses at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) were used, and copies of the questionnaire were sent to colleagues in the 4 other Northern universities offering hospitality management courses.

The response rates are indicated in table 3.

Table 3 main study response rates – usable questionnaires returned[1]

Group	Numbers distributed	Returned	Percentage return
Administrative staff	51	7	14[2]
Academic staff	315	120	38
Employers	200	70	35
Alumni	71	29	41
Current students MMU	134	94	70
Current students other universities	[3]	37	[3]

[1]after second mailing
[2]most (5) were from academic staff with an administrative role
[3]as these were distributed via third parties this figure is unavailable

The data from the questionnaires were entered into the data frame, prepared on SPSS for the pilot study, which had been modified to accommodate the additional scale. The

responses for the open-ended questions were listed in a separate data file, with an indication in the main database when a response had been given. Once the database had been established, it was possible to analyse the data in a wide variety of ways, using the full dataset or selected parts of it.

As the response from administrative staff was very limited, it was decided that this was not viable as a separate category. Consequently, where the respondents had indicated that they were in fact academic staff, they were included in the academic staff category, the remaining respondents in this category were not included in the data matrix.

Three main statistical procedures were carried out on the data, namely: 1) calculation of the means and differences between the two scales, 2) analysis of variance, and 3) factor analysis. The free response items were also examined for any useful data they might contain.

8.2 Missing values

A decision had to be made about cases with missing data.

For the calculation of the means, cases with missing values for some variables were ignored in the calculation for the variables concerned, but included in other calculations.

For the factor analysis, a case with missing data for a particular variable was dropped from the analysis of that variable. This retained the maximum amount of data in the analysis without introducing the possible distortion of using an arbitrary value such as the mean value.

8.3 Measures of reliability

It was not feasible to repeat the survey to test whether similar responses would be achieved. Consequently only a limited amount of checking for reliability was possible. The Cronbach's alpha value calculated for the ideal scales was 0.9604, a very high value (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). Deleting any of the items made only a marginal difference (to a low of 0.9598) and did not raise this value in any case.

The value for the actual scales was an alpha value of 0.9530, also a very high value. Deleting any of the items made only a marginal difference (to a low of 0.9519) and did not raise this value in any case.

These alpha values indicated a high level of internal reliability (Bryman & Cramer, 2001).

Some of the items covered an aspect of the same area to another item. For example, one item asked for opinions concerning the ability of the graduates to speak a language other than English; another asked opinions of whether a foreign language should be part of the subject content. Comparison of the scores given showed they were similar, and they appeared in the same factor in the factor analysis. This suggested that the items were being responded to consistently.

Items that appeared to have a direct connection appeared in the same component produced by the factor analysis *e.g.* the computer related items.

8.4 Means

A discussion of the analysis of the means can be found in chapter 9.

Mean values were calculated for both scales for each item. They were calculated as combined means, and for each of the stakeholder groups separately. This procedure, and the following ones, assumes linearity of the 5-point type scales. Although there are some possible statistical objections to this, it is widely used procedure, which is deemed to be acceptable (Oppenheim, 1992; Calder, 1996). The means were sorted overall and for each group to highlight the items rated most and least highly. The differences between the two scales were calculated for the combined values and for each group.

In order to allow for easier comparison of these differences, the difference in the mean was divided by the mean standard deviation of the two scales.

$$\frac{mean\ ideal - mean\ actual}{(SD\ ideal + SD\ actual\ /2)}$$

This produced a value for each item, sometimes known as the effect size, that could be used for comparison (Cohen, 1988). An advantage of this measure was that it avoided any problems with ceiling and floor affects, and made comparing results from different sized groups more valid. It also took into account the range of opinion expressed. This is referred to as the standardised difference in subsequent discussions.

8.5 Analysis of variance

This procedure compares the means of unrelated samples by comparing the within-group variance with the between-group variance (Bryman & Cramer, 2001).

Each item on the questionnaire was considered a discrete item for the purpose of this analysis, and the comparison was made between the mean scores for the various

stakeholder groups to look for any significant difference between the groups for each item.

As noted in the section concerning the procedures used for the pilot study, the data were generally positively skewed. Many statistical procedures assume that the data approximates to a normal distribution. Accordingly, the data as well as being assessed for significance using ANOVA (analysis of variance) – a parametric test; was also subjected to the Kruskall-Wallis test (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). As this is a non-parametric test it makes no assumption as to the distribution of the data. As analysis using the Kruskall-Wallis test indicated virtually no from variation from that resulting from ANOVA, it was concluded that it was reasonable to use parametric methods.

Tukey's test was used as a *post hoc* test to determine where the actual differences within the groups lay (Bryman & Cramer, 2001).

8.6 Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis using principal component analysis (Direct Oblimin procedure) was used to determine if there were certain factors that could be used as determinants of the quality of higher education hospitality management courses, which could be derived by grouping together variables used in the questionnaire. The process of factor analysis determines the factors by measuring the correlations between various variables, noting connections between them and grouping together variables that appear to be linked.

A detailed discussion of factor analysis can be found in appendix IV. The results of the principal components analysis are discussed in chapter 10.

8.7 Non-scaled items

The free responses were collated so that any important aspects could be identified. This was initially carried out by means of a coding system, using the SPSS value command. However this proved cumbersome in view of the variety of the data. Consequently, it was copied into a word document using the questionnaire item numbers as headings. This was then analysed manually.

The extent of the free responses can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who gave free responses[1]

Item	Academics	Employers	Alumni	Students	Total
Total number of respondents (n)	118	68	29	130	345
5f) Graduates are able to make appropriate use of computers and their software for other purposes	3.4		7.0	0.8	2.0
19e) Graduates become competent in operational skills utilised in other areas	6.8	5.9	10.3	3.1	5.5
20g) Graduates have knowledge of other sectors of the hospitality industry	8.5	1.5	3.5	3.1	4.6
31i) The importance of other formats in the assessment strategy	7.6		3.5		2.9
35j) The theoretical parts of the course include other areas	7.6	1.5	6.9	0.8	3.8
37 Optimal duration of work experience (other than the suggested durations)	3.4	4.4	10.3	4.6	4.6
39b)iv) Students experience practical experience in other areas during work experience	22.0	25.0	24.1	9.2	18.0
Final comments	7.6	14.7	17.2	10.8	11.0

[1]Figures calculated as a % of respondents in each group who made a comment, compared to the total number of completed questionnaires from that group (n).

Although a considerable number of respondents made some comment in the free response sections, there was great variety in what was written. Respondents usually commented in none of the free response sections or in several. No recurrent themes emerged and so it was concluded that no major omissions had been made in the compilation of the questionnaire. Most comments were made concerning other areas where practical experience should be gained. However, there was considerable variety

in the suggestions made, with no particular area being mentioned by more than six respondents.

The very large majority of all groups indicated an optimal duration of work experience, 97.4% of respondents indicating a duration for this question. A summary of the responses to this question can be seen in table 5.

Table 5: Optimum duration of work experience % of respondents[1]

group	n	1 month	6 weeks	3 months	6 months	6/12 months	12 months	18 months
academics	115		0.9	6.1	27.0	1.7	61.7	
employers	66	1.5		7.8	25.8	3.0	59.1	
alumni	28	3.6			21.4		67.9	
students	127	1.6		5.5	18.1	0.8	70.0	1.6
total	336	1.2	0.3	5.7	22.9	1.2	64.9	0.6

[1]Figures calculated as a % of respondents in each group who noted the duration, compared to the total number who indicated a value from that group (n).

As can be seen in table 5, there was an overwhelming preference for an extended period of work experience. A large proportion (> 59%) of all groups indicated that 12 months was the appropriate duration and > 85% in all groups indicated 6 months or more. This corresponds with the notion that acquisition of operational skills is of importance in hospitality management degrees.

Chapter 9.0: Analysis of the mean values of the scales

9.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the results that were obtained from the various analyses of the mean values of the scales. The aim of the analyses was to provide insight into the perception of the quality of hospitality management higher education by the various stakeholders groups, and to facilitate comparisons between the groups.

9.2 Means

The mean values of the responses were examined, making the assumption of linearity discussed in section 8.4. This gave a figure that could be regarded as a measure of the relative importance of the items as perceived by the various stakeholders, either collectively, using the combined data, or as separate groups. It also allowed for comparisons between the groups to be made using statistical tests of significance. In addition the use of two scales for each item in the main study also allowed for a comparison of importance of the item compared to what was perceived to be being achieved in courses. This provided an extra dimension in that it indicated areas where courses were not reaching the level aspired to by their stakeholders.

The items of greatest interest were the ones which a) generated a relatively high mean, b) generated a relatively low mean and c) exhibited a large difference between the ideal and the actual means for the same item, especially where the ideal scale was given a high rating.

As can seen in table 3, the data were skewed towards high side of the scale. This was particularly obvious in the case of the ideal scales. When comparing the difference between the ideal and actual responses, it was desirable to use a standardised measure

(Cohen, 1988). Consequently, as described in section 8.4, the mean difference between the scales for each item was divided by the mean standard deviation of the two scales:

$$\frac{\textit{mean ideal} - \textit{mean actual}}{(\textit{SD ideal} + \textit{SD actual})/2}$$

It was decided that a particular focus for discussion should be those items, where the standardised difference between the ideal scale and the actual scale was large. This was felt to indicate a problem with that item, and how the aspect it referred to was delivered in courses. This was thought to be particularly the case where the item concerned scored highly on the ideal scale. This suggested that it was an item of considerable importance to the relevant stakeholders.

A brief summary of the main points is given below, and reference is made to the relevant tables where appropriate. Table 6 provides a summary of the combined data; it also shows the raw difference and the standardised difference between the two scales, for each item. Similar data for the separate groups can be found in appendix III.

Table 6 Combined means*

Item number and summary questionnaire order	ideal scale	SD	actual scale	SD	difference	standardised difference
1a) written English	4.52	.69	3.54	.80	0.98	1.32
1b) spoken English	4.50	.74	3.61	.85	0.89	1.14
2 use information for decisions	4.56	.65	3.50	.79	1.06	1.46
3 manipulate financial data	4.27	.84	3.27	1.04	1.00	1.08
4 determine solutions to problems	4.46	.68	3.45	.83	1.01	1.35
5a) computers word processing	4.35	.82	3.85	.95	0.50	0.58
5b) computers spreadsheets	4.19	.78	3.34	.98	0.85	0.95
5c) computers databases	3.91	.90	3.00	1.05	0.91	0.93
5d) computers booking systems	3.94	.96	2.88	1.09	1.06	1.02
5e) computers information retrieval	4.27	.83	3.40	.96	0.87	0.97
6 interact with people	4.61	.63	3.62	.91	0.99	1.29
7 language other than English	3.63	1.16	2.10	1.01	1.53	1.44
8 operate as junior manager	4.13	.84	3.19	.97	0.94	1.06
9 apply general management	4.36	.71	3.27	.89	1.09	1.36
10 act independently	4.33	.73	3.35	.87	0.98	1.21
11 set personal targets	4.30	.78	3.03	1.00	1.27	1.41
12 work in a team	4.64	.61	3.81	1.00	0.83	1.03
13 know management theory	4.36	.79	3.53	.95	0.83	0.95

Table 6 Combined means (*continued)*

14a) interpret numerical information	4.19	.84	3.04	.92	1.15	1.30
14b) interpret verbal information	4.29	.76	3.40	.85	0.89	1.12
15 retrieve information	4.28	.81	3.47	.95	0.81	0.93
16a) plan working personally	4.29	.70	3.36	.87	0.93	1.19
16b) plan working for others	4.14	.79	3.04	.89	1.10	1.32
17 adequate numeracy	4.40	.76	3.20	.91	1.20	1.44
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.26	.75	3.25	.95	1.01	1.20
19 competent in operational skills	4.33	.78	3.36	.99	0.97	1.10
19a) reception skills	4.00	.91	2.81	1.13	1.19	1.18
19b) kitchen skills	3.85	.94	2.97	1.10	0.88	0.87
19c) restaurant skills	3.98	.88	3.27	1.07	0.71	0.74
20 knows a number of sectors	4.35	.80	3.47	.99	0.88	0.99
20a) hotel sector	4.40	.80	3.78	.88	0.62	0.72
20b) restaurant sector	4.30	.78	3.58	.93	0.72	0.84
20c) travel agency sector	3.38	1.18	2.19	1.04	1.19	1.08
20d) fast food sector	3.49	1.13	2.68	1.08	0.81	0.73
20e) conference sector	3.96	.96	2.72	1.05	1.24	1.21
20f) special event sector	3.93	.91	2.66	1.04	1.27	1.31
21 depth study of a sector	4.39	.83	3.71	1.06	0.68	0.75
22 comparable academic standard	4.45	.78	3.44	1.04	1.01	1.13
23 concepts for higher management	4.27	.82	3.31	.96	0.96	1.08
24 equipped for hospitality industry employment	4.65	.65	3.97	.93	0.68	0.87
25 equipped for employment outside hospitality industry	4.21	.87	3.52	1.02	0.69	0.78
26a) skills for personal development	4.44	.63	3.61	.88	0.83	1.12
26b) skills for professional development	4.43	.68	3.53	.93	0.90	1.14
27 assessments cover full range of outcomes	4.32	.80	3.57	.97	0.75	0.85
28 assessments in proportion to learning time	4.26	.79	3.37	1.01	0.89	1.00
29 ensure a minimum in all assessments	4.44	.78	3.71	1.02	0.73	0.82
30 variety of formats	4.42	.77	3.69	.99	0.73	0.83
31a) assessment examination	3.86	1.00	3.69	1.05	0.17	0.19
31b) assessment open book	3.36	1.15	2.87	1.12	0.49	0.44
31c) assessment seminars	3.80	.95	3.25	1.01	0.55	0.57
31d) assessment written assignments	4.36	.80	4.12	.85	0.24	0.30
31e) assessment reports	4.38	.79	3.93	.89	0.45	0.52
31f) assessment practical tests	4.14	.99	3.40	1.12	0.74	0.72
31g) assessment dissertation	4.28	.94	4.09	1.01	0.19	0.21
31h) assessment oral presentations	4.33	.92	3.63	1.11	0.70	0.70
32 some integrated assessments	4.10	.86	3.22	1.06	0.88	0.92
33 all assessments count	3.78	1.21	3.31	1.14	0.47	0.37
34 ensure individual completion of assessments	4.28	1.02	3.20	1.10	1.08	1.05
35a) theory marketing	4.45	.75	3.98	.92	0.47	0.61
35b) theory foreign language	3.71	1.17	2.37	1.22	1.34	1.13
35c) theory accounting	4.27	.87	3.41	1.13	0.86	0.87
35d) theory hygiene	4.26	.96	3.58	1.27	0.68	0.60
35e) theory nutrition	3.57	1.16	2.66	1.17	0.91	0.79
35f) theory human resource management	4.53	.71	3.92	1.02	0.61	0.69
35g) theory law	4.05	.95	2.95	1.15	1.10	1.05
35h) theory management	4.67	.64	3.92	1.02	0.75	0.92
35i) theory research methods	4.15	.94	3.31	1.15	0.84	0.85

Table 6 Combined means (*continued*)

36 students given extra support in difficulties	4.58	.71	3.12	1.14	1.46	1.58
37 undertake work experience	4.51	.87	4.15	1.03	0.36	0.38
38a) students influence content	3.79	1.06	2.62	1.17	1.17	1.07
38b) students influence process	3.85	.94	2.75	1.07	1.10	1.12
38c) students influence assessment method	3.62	1.15	2.62	1.10	1.00	0.91
39 experience hospitality industry skills	4.52	.72	3.62	1.08	0.90	1.00
39a) experience hospitality industry skills as part of academic curriculum	4.18	.84	3.36	1.05	0.82	0.89
39b) experience hospitality industry skills during work experience	4.56	.71	4.02	1.03	0.54	0.62
39b)i) experience in reception	4.15	.98	3.21	1.14	0.94	0.95
39b)ii) experience in kitchen	3.90	1.03	3.21	1.12	0.69	0.64
39b)iii) experience in restaurant	4.11	.95	3.68	1.00	0.43	0.45
40a) main focus personal development	4.14	.76	3.39	.89	0.75	0.89
40b) main focus general attributes	4.19	.82	3.39	.93	0.80	0.94
40c) main focus hospitality industry attributes	4.41	.77	3.85	.93	0.56	0.67
41 employers affect course content	3.89	.97	2.59	1.11	1.30	1.26
42a) teaching strategies CAL	4.26	.87	3.28	1.11	0.98	0.99
42b) teaching strategies lectures	4.23	.89	4.12	.90	0.11	0.15
42c) teaching strategies seminars	4.36	.78	3.75	1.03	0.61	0.70
42d) teaching strategies tutorials	4.38	.85	3.57	1.14	0.81	0.85
42e) teaching strategies self study materials	4.06	.89	3.31	1.08	0.75	0.78
42f) teaching strategies group activities	4.15	.98	3.70	1.04	0.45	0.44
42g) teaching strategies dissertation	4.29	.92	3.99	1.03	0.30	0.26
42h) teaching strategies students presentations	4.39	.85	3.71	1.07	0.68	0.71

* values adjusted to 2dp

Further tables are provided to highlight specific points, as indicated at the appropriate points in the text.

9.3 Combined means

This section discusses the mean of all responses representing the collective view of the stakeholders.

As can be seen in table 7 the mean values of the responses for the ideal scale were generally high, with only a very small proportion of the items (3.3%) close to the mid point of the scale ($> 3.0, \geq 3.5$) and the large majority (76.7%) > 4.0. No items were rated below the mid-point of the scale.

Table 7: Frequency of means - ideal scales

Frequency of means - ideal scales								
Group	**>4.5**	**4.01-4.50**	**3.51-4.00**	**3.01-3.50**	**2.51-3.00**	**2.01-2.50**	**1.51-2.00**	**Total**
combined	11	58	18	3				90
academics	31	41	15	3				90
employers	8	46	32	4				90
alumni	25	46	17	2				90
students	4	61	21	4				90
% in each response category								
Group	>4.5	4.01-4.50	3.51-4.00	3.01-3.50	2.51-3.00	2.01-2.50	1.51-2.00	**Total %**
combined	12.2	64.4	20.0	3.3				100
academics	34.4	45.6	16.7	3.3				100
employers	8.9	51.1	35.6	4.4				100
alumni	27.8	51.1	18.9	2.2				100
students	4.4	67.8	23.3	4.4				100

This general high distribution of scores was as expected. As discussed in chapter 6, the derivation of the items was designed to produce a list of items considered of importance to the quality of hospitality management education. Therefore, if this had been achieved, it was likely that the items would be rated fairly highly. The pilot study had confirmed the probability that the items would be highly rated by the various groups of respondents.

A marked contrast can be seen in table 8, which details the responses for the actual scales. This indicates that using the combined data, only 5.6% of the items on the actual scales were rated ≥ 4.0; Less than half (41.2%) of the items were rated > 3.5, and 18.9% of the items were rated below the mid-point of the scale.

Table 8: Frequency of means - actual scales

Frequency of means - actual scales								
Group	>4.5	4.01-4.50	3.51-4.00	3.01-3.50	2.51-3.00	2.01-2.50	1.51-2.00	**Total**
combined		5	32	36	14	3		90
academics		19	27	25	16	2	1	90
employers			22	46	18	4		90
alumni		12	31	28	13	4	2	90
students		4	27	39	13	7		90

Table 8: Frequency of means - actual scales *(continued)*

% in each response category								
Group	>4.5	4.01-4.50	3.51-4.00	3.01-3.50	2.51-3.00	2.01-2.50	1.51-2.00	**Total %**
combined		5.6	35.6	40.0	15.6	3.3		100
academics		21.1	30.0	27.8	17.8	2.2	1.1	100
employers			24.4	51.1	20.0	4.4		100
alumni		13.3	34.4	31.1	14.4	4.4	2.2	100
students		4.4	30.0	43.3	14.4	7.8		100

The responses on the actual scales were less positive than those on the ideal scales. For every item, the ideal scale was rated more highly than the perception of what actually occurs, as can be seen in table 6. To some extent, this can be explained by the fact that there is a tendency to aspire to a higher level than is achievable in something that seems important. However, it is also possibly indicative of a more specific dissatisfaction with courses, and with the graduates that they produce.

9.3.1 High means

As can be seen from table 9, all items generating a combined mean ≥ 4.5 were responses on the ideal scale. Only three of the items with a mean ≥ 4.0 were responses on the actual scale. Of these high scoring actual items, one was connected with work experience, the other two with assessment. Comparisons between groups (indicated by the Tukey test) are discussed in section 9.4.

Table 9: High combined means and group differences

Items with high combined means (≥ 4.0) sorted in descending order of means			
Item number and summary	**ideal or actual**	**combined mean**	**groups with significant difference (p = 0.05)**
35h) theory management.	*ideal*	4.67	academics>employers
24 equipped to gain hospitality industry employment	*ideal*	4.65	academics>employers academics>students
12 work effectively as a team member	*ideal*	4.64	none
6 interact with other people	*ideal*	4.61	academics>students
36 students given extra support in difficulties	*ideal*	4.58	none
2 utilise information to make decisions	*ideal*	4.56	academics>students

Table 9: High combined means and group differences *(continued)*

39b) students experience skills of hospitality industry during work experience	*ideal*	4.56	academics>students
35f) theory human resource management	*ideal*	4.53	academics>employers academics>students
1a) written English	*ideal*	4.52	academics>students
39 students experience skills of hospitality industry as part of course	*ideal*	4.52	none
37 students undertake work experience	*ideal*	4.51	none
1b) spoken English	*ideal*	4.50	none
4 determine solutions to problems	*ideal*	4.46	academics>employers academics>students
22 comparable academic standard	*ideal*	4.45	none
35a) theory includes marketing	*ideal*	4.45	academics>employers academics>students
26a) skills for continuing personal development	*ideal*	4.44	none
29 ensure a minimum standard in all assessed areas	*ideal*	4.44	academics>employers academics>students
26b) skills for continuing professional development	*ideal*	4.43	none
30 assessments in a variety of formats	*ideal*	4.42	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
40c) main focus hospitality industry attributes	*ideal*	4.41	none
17 adequate numeracy	*ideal*	4.40	none
20a) knowledge of hotels	*ideal*	4.40	none
42h) teaching: students presentations	*ideal*	4.39	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
31e) assessment reports	*ideal*	4.38	none
42d) teaching strategies tutorials	*ideal*	4.38	academics>employers academics>students
9 apply general management principles	*ideal*	4.36	academics>employers academics<alumni, academics>students
13 know management theory as applied to hospitality industry	*ideal*	4.36	academics>employers academics>alumni, academics>students
31d) importance of written assignments	*ideal*	4.36	academics>employers employers<students
42c) teaching strategies: seminars	*ideal*	4.36	academics>employers academics>students, employers<alumni, employers<students

Table 9: High combined means and group differences *(continued)*

5a) computers word processing	*ideal*	4.35	academics>employer academics<students
20 knowledge of a number of sectors	*ideal*	4.35	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
10 act independently	*ideal*	4.33	none
19 competent in operational skills	*ideal*	4.33	none
31h) assessment oral presentations	*ideal*	4.33	academics>students, alumni>students
27 assessment full range of learning outcomes	*ideal*	4.32	academics>employers academics>students
11 set personal targets	*ideal*	4.30	none
20b) knowledge of restaurant	*ideal*	4.30	none
14b) interpret verbal information	*ideal*	4.29	academics>employers academics>students
16a) plan working personally	*ideal*	4.29	none
15 retrieve information	*ideal*	4.28	academics>employers
31g) assessment dissertation	*ideal*	4.28	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
34 ensure completion only by individual	*ideal*	4.28	none
3 manipulate financial data	*ideal*	4.27	academics>employers academics>students
5c) computers information retrieval	*ideal*	4.27	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
13 know concepts of management	*ideal*	4.27	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
35c) theory financial accounting	*ideal*	4.27	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
18 professional ethics	*ideal*	4.26	none
28 are in proportion to the learning time	*ideal*	4.26	academics>employers employers<students
35d) theory hygiene	*ideal*	4.26	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
42a) teaching strategies CAL	*ideal*	4.26	none
42b) teaching strategies lectures	*ideal*	4.23	employers<students
42g) teaching strategies dissertations	*ideal*	4.23	academics>employers academics>students
25 equipped for employment outside hospitality industry	*ideal*	4.21	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
5b) computers spreadsheets	*ideal*	4.19	academics>employers employers<students

Table 9: High combined means and group differences *(continued)*

14a) interpret numerical information	*ideal*	4.19	academics>employers academics>students
40b) main focus general attributes	*ideal*	4.19	employers<alumni
39 experience hospitality industry skills as part of the academics curriculum	*ideal*	4.18	none
35i) theory research methods	*ideal*	4.15	academics>employers academics>alumni employers<students
39b)i) experience in reception	*ideal*	4.15	none
42f) teaching: group activities	*ideal*	4.15	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
16b) plan working for others	*ideal*	4.14	none
31f) importance of practical tests	*ideal*	4.14	employers>students alumni>students
40a) main focus personal development	*ideal*	4.14	none
8 operate as a junior manager	*ideal*	4.13	employers<students
31d) assessment written assignments	*actual*	4.12	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
42b) teaching: lectures	*ideal*	4.12	employers<students
39b)iii) experience in restaurant	*ideal*	4.11	none
32 some integrated assessments	*ideal*	4.10	academics>employers academics>students
31g) assessment dissertation	*actual*	4.09	academics>employers employers<alumni
42e) teaching strategies self study materials	*ideal*	4.06	none
35g) theory law	*ideal*	4.05	none
39b) experience skills of hospitality industry during work experience	*actual*	4.02	academics>employers academics>students
19a) competent in reception	*ideal*	4.00	none

The highest items had a mix of different foci, generally connected with skills or abilities required in the workplace. The highest item without any vocational focus was:

36 Students are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties ... ideal (mean 4.58)

This emphasis on vocational elements confirms that stakeholders see hospitality management courses as essentially vocational courses preparing for employment in the hospitality industry

9.3.2 Low means

This section highlights the items given a low rating, *i.e.* those items with a mean response of ≤ 3.00. As can be seen in table 10, 17 scales had a combined mean of ≤ 3.00, they were all actual scales

Table 10: Low combined means and group differences

Items with low means (≤ 3.0) sorted ascending		
Item number and summary (all actual scales)	**mean**	**groups with significant differences (p = 0.05)**
7 language other than English	2.10	none
20c) knowledge of travel agency	2.19	none
35b) theory foreign language	2.37	none
41 employers affect course content	2.59	none
38a) students influence course content	2.62	academics>alumni, academics>students
38c) students influence method of assessment	2.62	none
20f) knowledge of special events	2.66	none
35e) theory nutrition	2.66	academics>students
20d) knowledge of fast food	2.68	academics>employers, academics>students
20e) knowledge of conference	2.72	none
38b) students influence process	2.75	none
19a) competent in reception skills	2.81	academics>students
31b) assessment open book examinations	2.87	none
5d) computers booking systems	2.88	none
35g) theory law	2.95	academics>students
19b) competent in kitchen skills	2.97	employers<alumni
5c) computers data bases	3.00	none

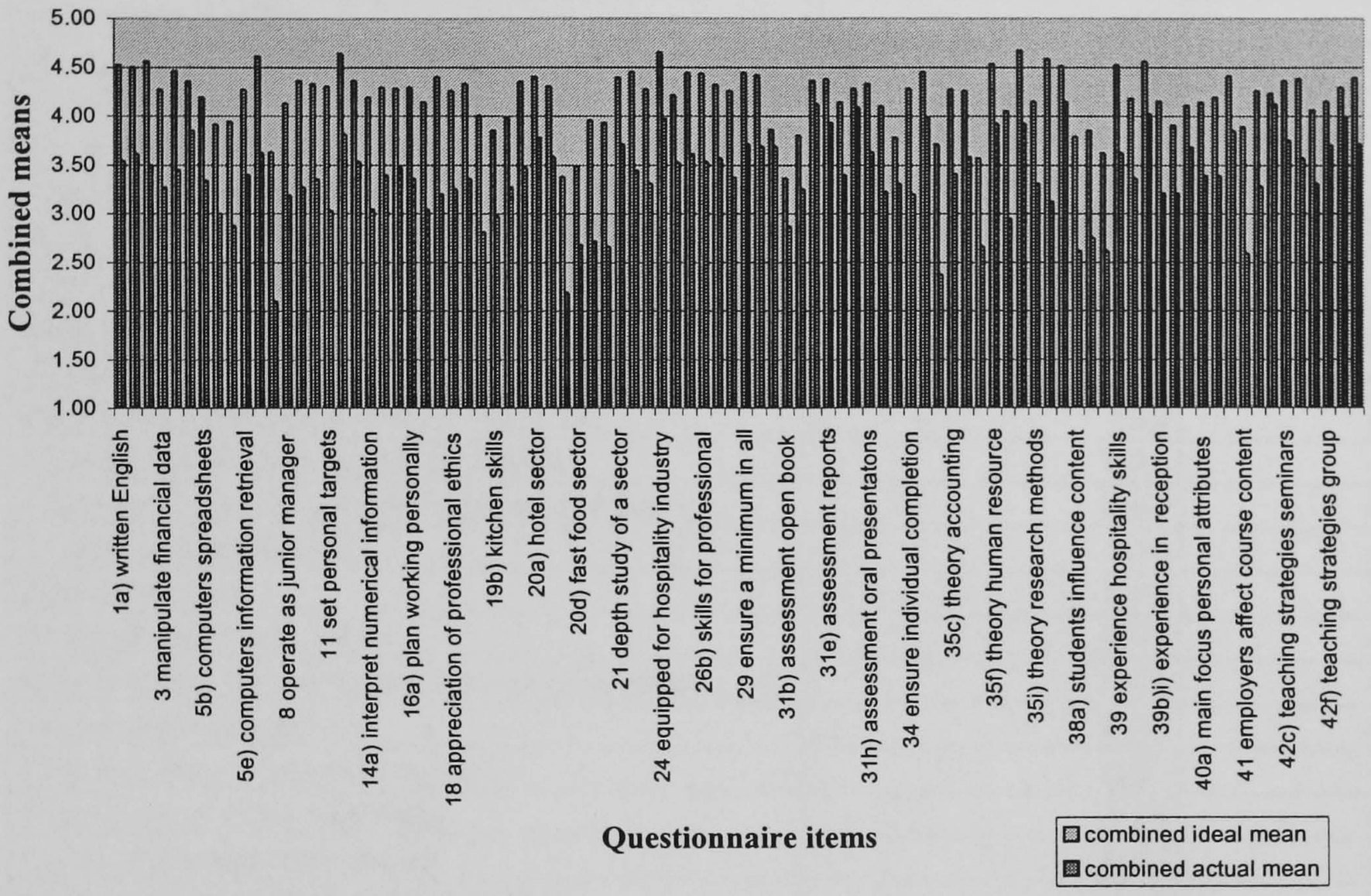
These items are from a variety of areas within the pool of items in the questionnaire.

There was only a limited difference between the groups. Most items showed no difference, the academics differed from other groups on various items.

9.3.3 Differences between the combined ideal and actual scales

Using the combined scales, all items scored more highly on the ideal than on the actual scales. Figure 1 shows a graphical representation of the two sets of scale values with the items in questionnaire order

Figure 1: Combined means items in questionnaire order



An overview of the lower values given to the actual scales can be seen in figure 1. This also shows that for most, but not all items, a lower ideal value was mirrored by a lower actual value.

Table 11 shows the standardised differences between the actual and the ideal scales for each item. The standardisation was carried out as discussed in section 9.2. The data suggested that, for none of the items, did the courses meet the aspirations of the stakeholders in terms of graduate abilities.

Table 11 Combined differences compared to means

Item number and summary sorted by descending ideal mean	standardised difference	ideal mean
35h) theory management	0.92	4.67
24 equipped for hospitality industry employment	0.87	4.65
12 work in a team	1.03	4.64
6 interact with people	1.29	4.61
36 students given extra support	1.58	4.58
2 use information for decisions	1.46	4.56
39b) hospitality industry skills during work experience	0.62	4.56
35f) theory human resource management	0.69	4.53
1a) written English	1.32	4.52
39 experience hospitality industry skills	1.00	4.52
37 undertake work experience	0.38	4.51
1b) spoken English	1.14	4.50
4 solutions to problems	1.35	4.46
22 comparable academic	1.13	4.45
35a) theory marketing	0.61	4.45
26a) skills for personal development	1.12	4.44
29 ensure a minimum in all	0.82	4.44
26b) skills for professional development	1.14	4.43
30 assessments in a variety of formats	0.83	4.42
40c) main focus hospitality industry attributes	0.67	4.41
17 adequate numeracy	1.44	4.40
20a) hotel sector	0.72	4.40
21 depth study of a sector	0.75	4.39
42h) teaching strategies students presentations	0.71	4.39
31e) assessment reports	0.52	4.38
42d) teaching strategies tutorials	0.85	4.38
9 apply general management	1.36	4.36
13 know management theory	0.95	4.36
31d) assessment written assignments	0.31	4.36
42c) teaching strategies seminars	0.70	4.36
5a) computers word processing	0.58	4.35
20 knows a number of sectors	0.99	4.35
10 act independently	1.21	4.33
19 competent in operational skills	1.10	4.33
31h) assessment oral presentations	0.70	4.33
27 assessments cover full range of outcomes	0.85	4.32
11 set personal targets	1.41	4.30
20b) restaurant sector	0.84	4.30
14b) interpret verbal information	1.12	4.29
16a) plan working personally	1.19	4.29
42g) teaching strategies dissertation	0.26	4.29
15 retrieve information	0.93	4.28
31g) assessment dissertation	0.21	4.28
34 ensure individual completion of assessments	1.05	4.28
3 manipulate financial data	1.08	4.27
5e) computers information retrieval	0.97	4.27
23 concepts for higher management	1.08	4.27
35c) theory accounting	0.87	4.27
18 appreciation of professional ethics	1.20	4.26
28 in proportion to learning time	1.00	4.26
35d) theory hygiene	0.60	4.26
42a) teaching strategies CAL	0.99	4.26

Table 11 Combined differences compared to means *(continued)*

42b) teaching strategies lectures	0.15	4.23
25 equipped for employment outside hospitality industry	0.78	4.21
5b) computers spreadsheets	0.95	4.19
14a) interpret numerical information	1.30	4.19
40b) main focus general attributes	0.95	4.19
39a) hospitality industry skills part of academic curriculum	0.89	4.18
35i) theory research methods	0.85	4.15
39b)i) experience in reception	0.95	4.15
42f) teaching strategies group activities	0.44	4.15
16b) plan working for others	1.32	4.14
31f) assessment practical tests	0.72	4.14
40a) main focus persona development	0.89	4.14
8 operate as junior manager	1.06	4.13
39b)iii) experience in restaurant	0.45	4.11
32 some integrated assessments	0.92	4.10
42e) teaching strategies self study materials	0.78	4.06
35g) theory law	1.05	4.05
19a) reception skills	1.18	4.00
19c) restaurant skills	0.74	3.98
20e) conference sector	1.21	3.96
5d) computers booking systems	1.02	3.94
20f) special event sector	1.31	3.93
5c) computers databases	0.93	3.91
39b)ii) experience in kitchen	0.64	3.90
41 employers affect course content	1.26	3.89
31a) assessment examination	0.19	3.86
19b) kitchen skills	0.87	3.85
38b) students influence process	1.12	3.85
31c) assessment seminars	0.57	3.80
38a) students influence content	1.07	3.79
33 all assessments count	0.37	3.78
35b) theory foreign language	1.13	3.71
7 language other than English	1.44	3.63
38c) students influence assessment method	0.91	3.62
35e) theory nutrition	0.79	3.57
20d) fast food sector	0.73	3.49
20c) travel agency sector	1.08	3.38
31b) assessment open book	0.44	3.36

A "t-test" procedure on the ideal-actual pairs of data for the combined means revealed that for all but two items there was a significant difference between the responses on the ideal and the actual scales ($p = 0.05$).

The two exceptions were:

31b) the importance of open book examinations in the assessment strategy
42b) students experience the teaching/learning strategy of lectures

As can be seen in table 11, there was a large difference between the two scales in many cases. 37 items (41.1%) had a standardised difference of ≥ 1.00.

These items with large differences included ones from all aspects covered by the questionnaire. However, the list of differences indicate that greater differences existed between the two scales of the generic items, rather than the more specifically hospitality management ones. This could be a reflection of perceived achievements or of higher expectations in this area.

Those items that had a high mean (≥ 4.5) for the ideal scale, and a large standardised difference (> 0.8) (Cohen, 1988), were considered the most important of the items in this respect. Nine of the items with this level of standardised difference were rated on the ideal scale with a mean of ≥ 4.5.

In item order these were:

1a) written English
1b) spoken English
2 utilise information to make decisions
6 interact with other people
12 work in a team
24 equipped for hospitality industry employment
35h) theory management
36 students given extra support when in difficulty
39 experience hospitality industry skills

The high ideal mean suggested that the item was regarded as of high importance to the quality of hospitality management courses. The large difference indicated a major discrepancy between this view, and what was actually being delivered by the courses. The item concerning students' support could be a key issue.

Item 36 *Students are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties,* had a high mean and showed the biggest discrepancy between the two scales and was concerned with the process of course delivery. This indicates considerable dissatisfaction with this

aspect of the education provision. Declining staff-student ratios mean that this items is less likely to be addressed.

The other items with the high mean and large discrepancy were concerned with skills possessed by the graduates. The key issues seemed to be concerned with generic skills required for employment.

All students on hospitality management programmes experience hospitality industry skills. The large difference between the scales suggests that insufficient weight was perceived to be given to this.

A small number of items showed a only small difference between the scales. 10 items (11.1%) had a standardised difference of less than 0.5. All of these were items relating to the process and structure of the courses. Generally, the items concerned with the course processes showed smaller differences than other areas *e.g.* those concerned with graduate skills and abilities.

9.3.4 Comparison with the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark statements

The emphasis in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) benchmark statements, on the importance of practical operational skills (section 3.6; see also chapter 11), is supported by the current research. This gave a mean of 4.52 for the ideal scale of the general item,

39 Students should experience the skills of hospitality management as part of the course.

There were varying, but generally high, values for more specific items. An even higher value was recorded for the acquisition of these skills during work experience (4.56). The undertaking of work experience appears in the benchmarks only as a possibility. This may be because it is noted in the general section on "*Learning, teaching and assessment*". This is referring to all sectors covered by the benchmarks, and some of

the other benchmark sectors are less linked to work experience. In this research, work experience was given an ideal rating of 4.51, and the actual rating was also high at 4.15 – the highest rating of all the actual scales. The experiencing of skills during work experience was another of only four actual scales to have a mean over 4.0.

In the description of the subject benchmarks, it is stated that hospitality programmes originate from a fundamentally vocational orientation (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). That this perspective is still a major consideration was strongly supported by the current research. This produced the second highest combined mean (4.65) for the ideal scale of:

24 Graduates are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry.

The parallel item:

25. Graduates have the necessary qualities to apply for jobs outside the hospitality industry

had a lower but fairly high rating (4.21).

The benchmark statement, that most programmes have a management focus, implies that some do not. In the current research, the results suggested that the study of management theory is considered, ideally, the most important feature of a course in hospitality management. It received the highest mean for any item (4.67). It was rated highly by all four groups on the ideal scale. It may be significant that the employers group rated it with a low mean on the actual scale, giving a large standardised difference between ideal and actual for this group of 1.22 (appendix III).

Of the highly rated items in the survey, very few were not included, either explicitly or implicitly, in the benchmark statements. One notable exception was the issue of student support. Whilst it might not be expected to be included in a learning outcomes based set of general benchmarks, it did figure in the preliminary work done for this study.

Additionally, it could become a key issue as unit funding decreases, and participation in higher education is further widened to include students with a less academic background.

The benchmarks are non-prescriptive in terms of subject content in the sense that they state that courses "*may include*" a list of items. The current study had identified a variety of subjects that could be included in hospitality management courses. Mostly these can be found in the benchmark lists. These were given a variety of responses in the survey. This indicated that respondents felt that certain subjects were more important than others; and that certain subjects were being delivered more effectively than others. The detailed curriculum of a course will reflect a number of issues, one of which will be the practicalities of delivery. These include staff expertise, and the cost of delivering particular curriculum areas.

The course processes, such as teaching and assessment methods, were not generally included in the benchmark statements, in view of the learning outcomes approach adopted. Consequently, many of the questionnaire items concerned with processes cannot be related to the benchmarks directly. Inclusion of a work experience placement is an exception to this. Several course process items received either a relatively low ideal rating, or one that varied considerably between groups. This does suggest that not including these in the benchmarks was appropriate. Moreover, the context in which the course is delivered may be influential in determining the appropriate delivery and assessment methods, making benchmarks more difficult to establish.

9.4 Comparison of group means

One objective of the research was to determine to what extent the various stakeholder groups differed from each other, in their view of the importance of the various items, and their perception of to what extent they are manifested.

Consequently, statistical tests were use to determine if there was any significant difference between the group responses on the various items. As discussed in Chapter 8, the procedures used were the Kruskal-Wallis test and ANOVA to test if there was any significance difference between the groups; the significance level used was the default level of the SPSS programme *i.e.* p = 0.05. Tukey's "Honestly Significant Difference" test was run coincidentally with the ANOVA procedure (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). This indicated which between groups' differences there were (see table 12). The similarity of results from the parametric and non-parametric tests, indicated that it was satisfactory to use procedures based on parametric assumptions.

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences

Item number and brief summary questionnaire order	**ideal/ actual**	**Kruskal -Wallis p value[1]**	**ANOVA p value[1]**	**Groups with significant difference (p = 0.05)**
1a) written English	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics<employers academics<students
1b) spoken English	*ideal*	0.03		
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics<employers academics<students
2 use information to make decisions	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.01	employers<students
3 manipulate financial data	*ideal*	0.01	0.00	academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	employers<students
4 determine solutions to problems	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

5a) computers word processing	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers>students
	actual			
5b) spreadsheets	*ideal*	0.01	0.01	academics>employers employers<students
	actual			
5c) data bases	*ideal*			
	actual			
5d) booking systems	*ideal*			
	actual	0.02	0.03	academics>students
5e) information retrieval	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
	actual			
6 interact with people	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students
	actual			
7 language other than English	*ideal*	0.01	0.01	academics>employers
	actual			
8 operate as a junior manager	*ideal*	0.02	0.02	academics>employers employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers
9 apply general management principles	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
10 act independently	*ideal*			
	actual			
11 set personal targets	*ideal*			
	actual			
12 work in a team	*ideal*	0.04		
	actual			
13 know management theory	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
14a) interpret numerical information	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual			
14b) interpret verbal information	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual			
15 retrieve information	*ideal*	0.01	0.01	academics >employers
	actual	0.05		employers <students
16 a) plan working personally	*ideal*			
	actual			

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

16 b)) plan working for others	*ideal*			
	actual	0.04		
17 adequate numeracy	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics<employers academics<alumni academics<students
18 professional ethics	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics<students
19 competent in operational skills	*ideal*			
	actual			
19a) reception	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students
19b) kitchen	*ideal*			
	actual	0.03	0.03	employers<alumni
19c) restaurant	*ideal*			
	actual	0.02	0.02	academics<alumni alumni>students
20 knowledge of a number of sectors	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
	actual	0.01	0.03	employers<alumni
20a) hotel	*ideal*		0.04	
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
20b) restaurant	*ideal*	0.04		
	actual			
20*c) travel agency*	*ideal*	0.03	0.04	employers<students
	actual			
20d) fast food	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
20e) conference	*ideal*			
	actual	0.04		
20f) special event	*ideal*			
	actual			
21 depth study of a sector	*ideal*		0.02	employers<alumni
	actual	0.01	0.02	academics<alumni employers<alumni
22 comparable academic standard	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
23 concepts for higher management	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.01	academics>employers employers<students

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

24 equipped for hospitality industry employment	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
25 equipped for employment outside hospitality industry	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni employers<students
26a) skills for personal development	*ideal*			
	actual	0.01	0.01	employers<students
26b) skills for professional development	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
27 assessments cover full range of learning outcomes	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
28 assessments are in proportion to the learning time	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
	actual	0.01	0.01	academics>employers academics>students
29 ensure a minimum standard in all assessments	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
30 a variety of assessment formats	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
31a) assessment examinations	*ideal*			
	actual	0.02	0.02	academics<alumni
31b) assessment open book examinations	*ideal*			
	actual			
31c) assessment seminar papers	*ideal*	0.03	0.02	academics>employers
	actual			
31d) assessment written assignments	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni employers<students

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

31e) assessment reports	*ideal*	0.02	0.03	
	actual			
31f) assessment practical tests	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	employers>students alumni>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
31g) assessment dissertation	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<alumni
31h) assessment oral presentations	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students alumni>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
32 some integrated assessments	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.05		academics<students
33 all assessments count	*ideal*	0.02	0.01	academics<employers employers>students
	actual			
34 ensure assessments completion only by individual	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students
35a) theory marketing	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni employers<students
35b) theory foreign language	*ideal*	0.02	0.02	academics>students
	actual			
35c) theory accounting	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics<students employers<alumni
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni alumni>students
35d) theory hygiene	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
35e) nutrition	*ideal*	0.01	0.01	academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

35f) theory human resource management	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students employers<alumni employers<students
35g) theory law	*ideal*			
	actual	0.02	0.03	academics>students
35h) theory management	*ideal*	0.03	0.01	academics>employers
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers employers<students
35i) theory research methods	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni employers<students
	actual	0.01	0.01	academics>students
36 students given extra support	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students employers>students
37 undertake work experience	*ideal*	0.013		
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students
38a) students influence content	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics<students employers<students
	actual	0.01	0.01	academics>alumni academics>students
38b) students influence process	*ideal*	0.02	0.01	employers<students
	actual			
38c) students influence assessment method	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics<students employers<students alumni<students
	actual			
39 experience hospitality industry skills	*ideal*	0.03		
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
39a) part of academic curriculum	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students
39b) during work experience	*ideal*	0.01		academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
39b)i) experience in reception	*ideal*			
	actual			
39b)ii) experience in kitchen	*ideal*			
	actual			
39b)iii) experience in restaurant	*ideal*	0.04	0.03	
	actual	0.04	0.04	alumni>students

Table 12: Item by item comparison of stakeholder groups' differences (*continued)*

40 a) main focus personal development	*ideal*	0.05	0.03	
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers
40b) main focus general attributes	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
40c) main focus hospitality industry attributes	*ideal*			
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
41 employers influence course content	*ideal*		0.05	
	actual			
42a) teaching strategies CAL	*ideal*			
	actual	0.01	0.01	academics>students
42b) teaching strategies lectures	*ideal*	0.01	0.01	employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.01	academics>employers academics<students
42c) teaching strategies seminars	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni employers<students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>students
42d) teaching strategies tutorials	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual			
42e) teaching strategies self-study materials	*ideal*			
	actual			
42f) teaching strategies group activities	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>students employers>students alumni>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students alumni>students
42g) teaching strategies dissertation	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni
42h) teaching strategies student presentations strategies	*ideal*	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>students alumni>students
	actual	0.00	0.00	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students

[1]only significance values ≤ 0.05 are shown

Examination of this table indicated that of the 90 items, 51 ideal scales and 60 actual scales showed a significant difference between at least one pair of groups. As shown in table 13, the majority of these showed a difference between at least two groups; no item showed a difference between all pairs of groups, and only 4 between more than three pairs.

Table 13: Number of items with significant differences between groups

Number of pairs of groups with a significant difference	1	2	3	4	5	Total	% of items
ideal	15	20	15	1		51	56.7
actual	20	23	14	2	1	60	66.7

This suggested a degree of variation resulting from the perspectives of the various stakeholders.

9.4.1 Very high means

This section highlights differences between groups for those items given a combined very high mean. This threshold was used to focus attention on the key items. The items without significant differences between the groups, as indicated by the statistical tests noted in section 5.4, with means ≥ 4.50 were all ideal as noted earlier. Several items were rated very highly (means ≥ 4.5) by more than one group of respondents. These items are identified in table 14.

One item appeared in all four groups

12 Graduates are able to work effectively as a member of a team *ideal*

A number of items were common to three groups: five items were given high ratings by academics, employers and alumni; two items were rated highly by academics, alumni and students. Three items were rated highly by academics, employers and students.

Table 14: Items with very high means (≥ 4.5) in several groups (combined means in brackets)

all groups	academics, employers and alumni	academics, alumni and students	academics, employers and students
12 *Graduates are able to work effectively as a member of a team ideal* (4.64)	6 *Graduates are able to interact with other people as appropriate to the situation ideal* (4.61) 2 *Graduates are able to identify and utilise appropriate information to make decisions ideal* (4.56) 39b) *Students experience the skills of hospitality industry operations during work experience ideal* (4.56) 39 *Students experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course ideal* (4.52) 1b) *Graduates are able to use spoken English clearly and accurately in a form suitable for the target audience ideal* (4.50	24 *Graduates are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry ideal* (4.65) 36 *Students are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties ideal* (4.58)	35h) *The theoretical part of the course includes management ideal* (4.67)

9.4.2 High means

Of the 61 scales given a combined mean in the range ≥ 4.0, < 4.5, 38 (62.3%) showed differences between the groups.

A major issue was that the employers tended to give lower ratings, and the academics higher ratings to the items in this ≥ 4.0, < 4.5 range. 30 of the 38 items, with differences between the groups, were given a statistically higher rating by academics compared to employers, including all 3 of the actual scales.

9.4.3 Low means

A comparison of the low means from the various groups indicated nine items that were rated at < 3.00 by all groups, (from the 17 that had an combined mean < 3.00). A further six were given low ratings by three of the four groups: four were given low ratings by employers, alumni and students; two were given low ratings by academics, employers and students. These are detailed in table 15. However the majority (11) showed no significant difference between the groups.

Table 15 Items with low means (<3.0) in several groups(combined means in brackets) ascending order of means

all groups	academics, employers and students	Employers, alumni and students
7 *Graduates are able to communicate in a major language other than English* *actual* (2.10) 20 *Graduates have knowledge of a number of particular sectors of the hospitality industry:* c) *travel agency* *actual* (2.19) 35b) *The theoretical part of the course includes foreign language(s)* *actual* (2.37) 41 *Employers have a significant affect on course content* *actual* (2.59) 38a) *Students are able to influence their course content* *actual* (2.62) 38c) *Students are able to influence their assessment method* *actual* (2.62) 20 *Graduates have knowledge of a number of particular sectors of the hospitality industry:* f) *special event* *actual* (2.66) 35e) *The theoretical part of the course includes nutrition* *actual* (2.66) 38b) *Students are able to influence their course content* *actual* (2.75)	20e) *Graduates have knowledge of conferences* *actual* (2.72) 19b) *Graduates become competent in kitchen skills* *actual* (2.97)	20 *Graduates have knowledge of a number of particular sectors of the hospitality industry:* d) *fast food* *actual* (2.68) 19a) *Graduates become competent in reception skills* *actual* (2.81) 31b) *Assessment include open book examinations* *actual* (2.87) 5d) *Graduates use computers for booking systems* *actual* (2.88)

9.4.4 Differences between the stakeholder groups on the ideal and actual scales

9.4.4.1 Introduction

As can be seen in table 16 there were considerable differences between the groups with regard to the items showing large differences between the two scales. This indicated differences between the groups with regard to the theoretical importance. Perhaps more importantly, it also illustrated differences with regard to the perception of what actually took place.

Table 16: Standardised differences between groups

Item number and summary questionnaire order	combined mean ideal	combined standard difference	academics standard difference	employers standard difference	alumni standard difference	students standard difference
1a) written English	4.52	1.32	2.08	1.01	1.60	0.89
1b) spoken English	4.50	1.14	1.66	0.85	1.39	0.81
2 use info for decisions	4.56	1.46	1.96	1.76	1.74	0.97
3 manipulate financial data	4.27	1.08	1.38	0.97	0.64	1.09
4 solutions to problems	4.46	1.35	1.88	1.41	1.11	1.08
5a) computers word processing	4.35	0.58	0.47	0.37	0.58	0.81
5b) computers spreadsheets	4.19	0.95	1.00	0.72	0.82	1.10
5c) computers databases	3.91	0.93	0.94	0.75	0.93	1.02
5d) computers booking systems	3.94	1.02	0.88	1.08	0.90	1.17
5e) computers information retrieval	4.27	0.97	1.14	0.67	1.41	0.93
6 interact with people	4.61	1.29	1.62	1.52	1.50	0.94
7 language other than English	3.63	1.44	1.92	1.18	1.68	1.20
8 operate as junior manager	4.13	1.06	0.97	1.09	1.78	1.05
9 apply general management principles	4.36	1.36	1.54	1.46	1.33	1.28
10 act independently	4.33	1.21	1.33	1.61	1.35	0.94
11 set personal targets	4.30	1.41	1.63	1.40	1.29	1.27
12 work in a team	4.64	1.03	1.05	1.12	1.02	1.00
13 know management theory	4.36	0.95	1.16	1.19	0.65	0.82
14a) interpret numerical information	4.19	1.30	1.79	1.05	0.86	1.16
14b) interpret verbal information	4.29	1.12	1.63	0.89	0.98	0.91
15 retrieve information	4.28	0.93	1.17	0.96	0.75	0.79
16a) plan working personally	4.29	1.19	1.48	1.51	0.87	0.92
16b) plan working for others	4.14	1.32	1.53	1.68	1.06	1.06
17 adequate numeracy	4.40	1.44	2.29	1.12	1.15	1.14
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.26	1.20	1.60	1.01	0.97	1.04
19 competent in operational skills	4.33	1.10	1.06	1.46	0.72	1.09
19a) reception skills	4.00	1.18	0.84	1.58	1.29	1.33
19b) kitchen skills	3.85	0.87	0.75	1.24	0.49	0.96
19c) restaurant skills	3.98	0.74	0.67	1.06	0.30	0.82
20 knows a number of sectors	4.35	0.99	1.14	0.76	0.91	1.08
20a) hotel sector	4.40	0.72	0.67	0.96	0.56	0.75
20b) restaurant sector	4.30	0.84	0.74	1.04	0.73	0.85

Table 16: Comparison of standardised differences between groups *(continued*

20c) travel agency sector	3.38	1.08	1.18	0.80	1.35	1.08
20d) fast food sector	3.49	0.73	0.89	0.52	0.49	0.78
20e) conference sector	3.96	1.21	1.30	1.26	1.13	1.18
20f) special event sector	3.93	1.31	1.31	1.09	1.68	1.32
21 depth study of a sector	4.39	0.75	0.70	0.80	0.65	0.81
22 comparable academic	4.45	1.13	1.26	1.00	1.62	1.12
23 concepts for higher management	4.27	1.08	1.00	1.09	1.28	1.17
24 equipped for hospitality industry employment	4.65	0.87	0.87	1.07	0.97	0.87
25 equipped for outside hospitality industry	4.21	0.78	0.61	0.82	1.18	0.89
26a) skills for personal development	4.44	1.12	1.30	1.49	1.03	0.88
26b) skills for professional development	4.43	1.14	1.21	1.41	1.21	0.96
27 assess full range of outcomes	4.32	0.85	0.63	1.03	0.93	1.09
28 assess in proportion to learning time	4.26	1.00	0.96	0.77	0.87	1.25
29 ensure a minimum in all assessments	4.44	0.82	0.88	0.98	0.62	0.81
30 variety of assessment formats	4.42	0.83	0.92	0.84	0.64	0.97
31a) assessment examination	3.86	0.19	0.26	0.26	-0.07	0.13
31b) assessment open book	3.36	0.44	0.54	0.26	0.44	0.42
31c) assessment seminars	3.80	0.57	0.78	0.22	0.83	0.47
31d) assessment written assignments	4.36	0.31	0.39	0.31	0.29	0.25
3e)1 assessment reports	4.38	0.52	0.67	0.56	0.71	0.36
31f) assessment practical tests	4.14	0.72	0.63	0.76	0.68	0.85
31g) assessment dissertation	4.28	0.21	0.42	0.16	0.00	0.12
31h) assessment oral presentations	4.33	0.70	0.66	1.06	0.95	0.65
32 some integrated assessments	4.10	0.92	1.40	0.80	1.10	0.54
33 all assessments count	3.78	0.37	0.29	0.63	0.47	0.37
34 ensure individual completion of assessments	4.28	1.05	1.48	0.95	1.26	0.68
35a) theory marketing	4.45	0.61	0.61	1.18	0.82	0.44
35b) theory foreign language	3.71	1.13	1.46	0.99	1.18	0.92
35c) theory accounting	4.27	0.87	0.86	1.11	1.19	0.86
35d) theory hygiene	4.26	0.56	0.47	0.85	0.55	0.74
35e) theory nutrition	3.57	0.79	0.81	0.93	0.47	0.82
35f) theory human resource management	4.53	0.69	0.56	1.47	0.67	0.62
35g) theory law	4.05	1.05	1.01	0.84	1.19	1.16
35h) theory management	4.67	0.92	0.88	1.22	1.28	0.82
35i) theory research methods	4.15	0.85	0.89	0.57	0.74	1.00
36 students given extra support	4.58	1.58	1.45	1.38	1.88	1.82
37 undertake work experience	4.51	0.38	0.21	0.78	0.59	0.33
38a) students influence content	3.79	1.07	0.66	0.79	1.35	1.57
38b) students influence process	3.85	1.12	0.83	0.82	1.27	1.49
38c) students influence assessment method	3.62	0.91	0.53	0.78	0.52	1.48
39 experience hospitality industry skills	4.52	1.00	0.65	1.11	1.23	1.27
39a) hospitality industry skills part of academic	4.18	0.89	0.61	0.98	0.72	1.25
39b) hospitality industry skills during work experience	4.56	0.62	0.89	0.83	0.80	0.68
39b)i) experience in reception	4.15	0.95	0.62	1.23	0.89	0.92
39b)ii) experience in kitchen	3.90	0.64	0.44	0.67	0.57	0.68
39b)iii) experience in restaurant	4.11	0.45	0.44	0.62	0.44	0.41
40a) main focus personal attributes	4.14	0.89	0.84	0.77	1.12	0.98

Table 16: Comparison of standardised differences between groups *(continued*

40b) main focus general attributes	4.19	0.95	0.70	0.87	1.52	1.12
40c) main focus hospitality industry attributes	4.41	0.67	0.47	1.01	0.63	0.73
41 employers affect course content	3.89	1.26	0.99	1.47	2.54	1.30
42a) teaching strategies CAL	4.26	0.99	0.82	0.93	1.05	1.17
42b) teaching strategies lectures	4.23	0.15	0.09	0.25	-0.05	0.39
42c) teaching strategies seminars	4.36	0.70	0.67	0.41	1.01	0.84
42d) teaching strategies tutorials	4.38	0.85	1.01	0.62	0.91	0.82
42e) teaching strategies self study materials	4.06	0.78	1.01	0.73	0.45	0.68
42f) teaching strategies group activities	4.15	0.44	0.34	0.94	0.57	0.40
42g) teaching strategies dissertation	4.29	0.26	0.35	0.22	-0.08	0.31
42h) teaching strategies students presentations	4.39	0.71	0.55	1.09	1.16	0.77

Examining table 16, taking each group differences, and comparing them to the combined values, yielded the following observations.

There was a general trend for all groups to follow the pattern of the combined values. In other words, items which showed a large difference between the combined scales tended to show a large difference for each group examined separately. Similarly items with a relatively low difference between the groups showed this across all groups.

9.4.4.2 Academic differences

36 items were rated with a standardised difference ≥ 1.00 by the academics. With the exception of the items concerning extra support for students and integrated assessments, none of the items with this degree of difference were specifically concerned with course processes. Given that the academic staff are the ones that run and organise the courses, this is understandable. A possible explanation for the two items in this category with the large differences is that these items are likely to be a reflection that pressures on staff time do not allow for this to be done.

Most of the items with this level of difference were connected with generic skills. There was a small number of hospitality items, mostly to do with sector knowledge, although operational competence was also included.

Of these items with large differences 12 were rated with a mean of ≥ 4.5. These were (ideal mean in brackets):

1a) written English (4.67)
1b) spoken English (4.59)
2 utilise information to make decisions (4.74)
3 manipulate and interpret financial data (4.56)
6 interact with other people (4.76)
9 apply general management principles (4.53)
12 work in a team (4.68)
13 know management theory (4.60)
22 comparable academic standard (4.74)
26a) skills needed for personal development (4.55)
26b) skills needed for professional development (4.50)
36 students given extra support when in difficulty (4.69)

Apart from item 36, all the items were concerned with generic skills related to employment.

The large differences that were seen on the academics responses were especially on items concerned with skills. It is of some interest that the academics that are responsible for designing and delivering the curriculum, should indicate such dissatisfaction with the students' performance and abilities. This may be indicative of the academics being confined within a system that does not allow them to produce the standard that they believe should be achieved.

9.4.4.3 Employer differences

40 items were rated with a standardised difference ≥ 1.00 by the employers. These items varied in their focus, but included all the items specifically related to operational skills used in the hospitality industry, as well as many generic skills.

It seemed that employers were generally dissatisfied with the skill level of graduates, particularly in specific vocational areas. The contrast that this makes with the academics more positive view of these hospitality management specific vocational skills aspects, highlights the academic–vocational divide. This could indicate a conceptual difference in the way that academics and employers view skills.

For example:

39: experience hospitality management skills as part of the course

had a very different standardised difference by the two groups. The academics standardised difference was 0.65, whereas the employers was 1.11.

Of the items with a large difference, 4 were rated with an ideal mean of ≥ 4.5. These were (ideal mean in brackets):

6 interact with other people (4.62)
12 work in a team (4.66)
35h) theory management(4.50)
39 experience hospitality management skills as part of the course (4.55)

9.4.3.4 Alumni differences

39 items were rated with a standardised difference of ≥ 1.00 by the alumni. These items ranged over all areas covered by the questionnaire, including a few items relating to course content and process, and many concerning generic skills.

Experience of various sectors of the hospitality management industry were included but few relating to specific hospitality operational skills.

The item with the largest difference – much higher than any other – was for:

41 Employers affect course content

All groups thought that there was a big difference between what should and did happen in this regard. However, this group who have recently made the transition from study to employment, seem to feel this as a major issue.

13 items of the items with a large difference between the scales were rated with an ideal mean ≥ 4.5, (ideal mean in brackets):

1a)written English (4.69)
1b)spoken English (4.66)
2 utilise information to make decisions (4.66)
4 determine solutions to problems (4.55)
6 interact with other people (4.69)
9 apply general management (4.59)
17 adequate numeracy (4.55)
35h) theory management (4.79)
36 students given extra support when in difficulties (4.69)
39 experience hospitality management skills as part of the course (4.61)
42c) teaching strategies seminars (4.54)
42h) teaching strategies student presentations (4.55)

These were predominantly concerned with generic skills. The two items concerning teaching strategies – seminars and student presentations – involved the students developing generic skills useful in the workplace. The alumni were the only group where the actual rating exceeded the ideal. This was for 2 items concerned with teaching strategies, and 1 with assessment.

9.4.3.5 Student differences

34 items were rated by the students with a standardised difference between the ideal and actual scales of ≥ 1.00. The largest differences were noted on the 4 items specifically related to students, and their relation to courses. The rest of the items covered a range of areas, including some aspects of course content and process as well as skills, both generic ones, and those specific to the hospitality industry.

Of the 34 items with large differences, 2 were rated with ideal means ≥ 4.5. These were (ideal mean in brackets):

12 work in a team (4.55)
36 students given extra support when in difficulties (4.51)

9.5 Summary

Considering the stakeholders overall, the ideal scales generated high means in all cases. This emphasised the importance given to the range of aspects which had been identified as possibly contributing to the quality of hospitality management courses.

The actual scales generated lower means in virtually all cases. All the low means were from the actual scales.

The differences between the scales indicated the discrepancy between what was viewed as desirable, and what was perceived as being achieved in practice. A significant difference was noted in all cases, indicating general dissatisfaction with the output of the courses.

Significant variations occurred between the various stakeholder groups on both the ideal and the actual scales, and in the differences between the two scales.

Chapter 10: Factor analysis

This chapter describes the process of factor analysis, as applied to the collected data. The results of the factor analyses are discussed in the order that they were generated by SPSS. An explanation of the process is given in appendix IV.

10.1 Introduction

Factor analysis was used to examine the data to reveal conceptual groupings between the variables and so simplify the data.

During the factor analysis a sequential series of steps are carried out, and these steps have decisions associated with them. The decisions made at each stage in the analysis of the data reported here are discussed in the relevant section.

The factor analysis had the additional function of providing an indication of the reliability of the variables as evidenced by the communalities.

10.2 Factor analysis procedure

10.2.1 Appropriateness of the data set for factor analysis

In the current study, the two indicators of whether the data set was appropriate for factor analysis used were Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO), and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Field, 2000).

The KMO test gave a value of 0.88 when applied to the ideal scales, and a value of 0.69 when applied to the actual scales. This indicated that the sample was adequate for the process of factor analysis, being > 0.5, and falling into Field's categories of *"great"* and *"mediocre"* respectively (Field, 2000). The Bartlett test also indicated the

appropriateness of the procedure with values of χ^2 of 14326 for the ideal scales, and 8069 for the actual scales significant at p = .001 in each case.

Field (2000) in a review of papers by several authors concludes that a sample of 300 seems to be adequate for most situations. The requirements for the ratio of subjects to variables has been noted as widely varying between different authors by both Kline (1994), and Field (2000). As the data from the main study contained 90 variables and a total sample of 342 subjects, the data set reported here fitted towards the lower end of the acceptable range reported by Kline (1994) at a ratio of 3.8:1. Consequently the data set was considered suitable for factor analysis. However, it was decided that it was only feasible to carry out the procedure on the complete set of data. It would not have been valid to distinguish between the four groups for the purpose of this analysis. Nonetheless, subsequent to the initial factor analysis it was possible to compare the groups using the components identified.

10.2.2 Type of factor analysis used

Field, (2000) and Tabachnick & Fidell, (2001), suggest using principal components analysis as it easier to interpret, and this was the procedure used for the current study. This means that the data reduction results in the extraction of components rather than factors, although there is little other difference in most cases with a reasonably sized dataset (Field, 2000). Both authors use the term factor whether principal components analysis, or another factor analysis is used. The difference is primarily mathematical, principal components analysis uses all the variance for the analysis whereas factor analysis uses only the shared variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). For clarity and accuracy the term component has been employed in this discussion.

10.2.3 Salient component loadings

Following the advice given by Stevens (1996) who suggests a minimum value of 0.298 for a sample of 300, the analysis in this study was set initially to suppress values less than 0.3. Following examination of the pattern matrix, the loadings at the lower end of this range were discarded for the purpose of calculating the component based scores.

Tabachnick & Fidell, (2001) suggest that there is no specific value which clearly indicates whether a particular variable should be included. They suggest that an inspection of the data is required to determine the appropriate value which will allow interpretation to be facilitated. An examination of the variable loadings from the SPSS output, indicated that at a loading of around 0.4, overlap between components was avoided.

Consequently, for the purpose of the analysis reported here, a value of 0.4 was regarded as salient, and was used as a general benchmark for determining the inclusion of a particular variable within a component. A loading less than 0.4 was regarded as low. However, where this meant that a logically or conceptually linked variable would have been excluded, it was included with the component for the purpose of calculating the component based score. Conversely, when the variable loading onto a component was moderate and exceeded 0.4, but the variable appeared unconnected with the component, it was excluded from the purpose of calculating the component based score.

10.2.4 Number of components extracted

There are two main methods of determining the number of components to extract. These are the scree plot, and the method devised by Kaiser of using eigenvalues greater than one as the criterion (eigenvalues-one) (Field, 2000).

In the current study the eigenvalues-one method indicated a lot of components many with only a very small number of variables. Consequently, the number of components to extract was initially determined by an examination of the scree plot and the continuity of the eigenvalues. These procedures suggested 10 components for the ideal scales, and 9 for the actual scales. This explained 50.7% and 46.5% of the variance respectively. Following the method suggested by Tabachnick & Fidell (2001), the residual correlations for this number of components were examined. This indicated that the residual values were low. These procedures provided confirmation that 10 components was an appropriate number to extract for the ideal scales, and 9 components for the actual scales.

10.2.5 Rotation

Rotation, is a key part of the process, to achieve a "simple structure", as discussed in appendix IV. This means that the pattern matrix shows each component has a few high loading variables with low loadings from the other variables.

Following the advice given by Cattell (1978) oblique rotation was used. This seemed the most appropriate given the fact that there seemed a distinct possibility that the components would have some relation to each other. In the present study the option of "Direct Oblimin" rotation was used (Kline, 1994); Kline suggests that this is the procedure of choice when oblique rotation is required.

10.2.6 Component based scores

Once the variables loading onto the component had been identified, component based scores were generated based on the components, using the appropriate scales. These were then compared across the groups and the standardised difference calculated. The significant differences were tested by means of ANOVA and the specific differences

between groups using the Tukey's *post hoc* test option (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). The standardised difference was calculated as the difference in means between the specified groups divided by the overall standard deviation, as discussed in section 9.2. In assessing the importance of the differences, the suggestions made by Cohen (1988) were used *viz*: < 0.2 was considered as very small, < 0.5 as small, < 0.8 as medium, and > 0.8 as large. Only pairs with a significant difference at p = 0.05 were noted in the standardised difference column of the tables.

10.2.7 Secondary principal component analysis

After component scores had been computed for the components revealed by the primary component analyses, they were subjected to a secondary principal component analysis. This was carried out using the same procedure as that used for the primary analysis. The results of this analysis are discussed in section 10.7.

The KMO test gave a value of 0.91 when applied to the ideal scales, and a value of 0.84 when applied to the actual scales. This indicated that the sample was adequate for the process of principal component analysis, being > 0.5, and falling into Field's (2000) categories of "*superb*" and "*great*" respectively. The Bartlett test also indicated the suitability of the procedure with values of χ^2 of 1216 for the ideal scales, and 854 for the actual scales significant at p =0.001 in each case.

As the two tests indicated appropriate values as suggested by Field (2000), principal component analysis was an appropriate procedure.

10.3 Principal component analysis of the ideal scales

This section discusses the components identified from the ideal scales. The components were labelled in a way that reflected the main aspects that seemed to be covered by the components given the variables that loaded onto them. There is an element of subjectivity in this labelling.

10.3.1 Components identified from the ideal scales

The method for identification of the component was as discussed in section 10.2. Ten components were identified and allocated an appropriate label. These are shown below. A summary of each of the variables, with significant loadings onto each component is shown in italics. The items are listed in descending order of their loading onto the component. The actual loadings are shown in brackets.

1. employment related (also included some general assessment variables)

25 have the necessary qualities to apply for jobs outside the hospitality industry (0.62)

28 are in proportion to the learning time devoted to the topic being assessed. (0.58)

29 ensure that all students reach a minimum standard in all assessed areas (0.56)

26a) have developed the skills needed for continuing personal development (0.55)

23 have the knowledge and concepts that will be required at higher management levels, i.e. beyond first or second employment destination (0.51)

27 cover the full range of specified learning outcomes (0.49)

22 assessments are seen to achieve an academic standard comparable to graduates in other disciplines (0.45)

20 have knowledge of a number of sectors of the hospitality industry (0.42)

24 are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry (0.41)

2. hospitality industry operational skills

39b)iii) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations - restaurant (0.76)

39b)ii) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations – kitchen (0.68)

19c) become competent in operational skills - restaurant (0.68)

39b)i) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations – reception (0.68)

19b) become competent in operational skills – kitchen (0.59)

19a) become competent in operational skills – reception (0.59)

19 become competent in operational skills utilised in the hospitality industry (0.37)

3. vocational preparation

35f) theoretical parts of the course include human resource management (0.63)

39b) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course during work experience (0.62)

39. experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course (0.59)

35h) theoretical parts of the course include management (0.57)

35a) theoretical parts of the course include marketing (0.47)

39a) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course as part of the academic curriculum (0.41)

36 are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties (0.37)

40c) main focus of the course is attributes particularly suitable for hospitality industry (0.34)

37 undertake an extended period of work experience (0.33)

4. personal/generic skills

11 set personal targets and regularly review progress towards meeting them (0.70)

16a) plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working personally (0.59)

16b) plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working for others (0.59)

14b) interpret the significance of data/information in verbal/non-numerical form (0.58)

10 act independently in a way appropriate to the situation (0.55)

17 achieve an adequate level of numeracy (0.52)

14a) interpret the significance of data/information in numerical form (0.49)

15 retrieve information from a variety of sources and in a variety of formats (0.49)

12 work effectively as a member of a team (0.44)

5. course content

35b) theoretical parts of the course include a foreign language (0.77)

7 communicate in a major language other than English (0.61)

35e) theoretical parts of the course include nutrition (0.69)

35d) theoretical parts of the course include hygiene (0.53)

35c) theoretical parts of the course include financial accounting (0.47)

35g) theoretical parts of the course include law (0.45)

35i) theoretical parts of the course include research methods (0.32)

6. use of computers

5b) make appropriate use of computers and their software for spreadsheets (0.78)

5c) make appropriate use of computers and their software for data bases (0.70)

5a) make appropriate use of computers and their software for word processing (0.70)

5e) make appropriate use of computers and their software for information retrieval (0.56)

5d) make appropriate use of computers and their software for booking systems (0.53)

7. influences on courses

38c) students are able to influence their course in respect of the method of assessment (0.83)

38a) students are able to influence their course in respect of the content (0.79)

38b) are able to influence their course in respect of the process (0.78)

41 employers have a significant effect on course content (0.40)

8. assessment types

31a) the importance of assessment by examinations (0.59)

31b) the importance of assessment by open book examinations (0.54)

31c) the importance of assessment by seminar papers (0.49)

31g) the importance of assessment by dissertation (0.48)

31d) the importance of assessment by written assignments (0.39)

9. student centred processes

31h) the importance of assessment by oral presentations (0.66)

31f) the importance of assessment by practical tests (0.49)

31e) the importance of assessment by oral presentations (0.49)

42h) students experience presentations (0.48)

42f) students experience group activities (0.47)

10. student learning experiences

42c) students experience seminars (0.68)

42b) students experience lectures (0.60)

42d) students experience tutorials (0.53)

42e) students experience self-study materials (0.41)

42g) students experience dissertation (0.40)

42a) students experience computer assisted learning (0.32)

The vocational elements seem to fall into several components, and the hospitality industry operational skills were separated from the other vocational aspects. Personal skills, which although they may have vocational aspects, are not necessarily linked to these, could also be identified as a component. It also appeared that specific types of assessment were perceived as a discrete entity, separated from other aspects of course such as the method of delivery and the content. However, more general assessment elements were associated with aspects concerning general employment issues. Variables with a large amount of student interaction (*e.g.* presentations) also appeared to be viewed as distinct from other elements of the process.

The large majority of the components, which were felt by the stakeholders to be a part of quality in hospitality management courses, were generic and not specifically related to the hospitality industry. The hospitality specific items tended to be grouped together.

10.3.2 Group comparison of component scores based on ideal scales

Table 17 shows the details of the component scores from the ideal scales, computed as the mean response for items in that component.

Table 17: Ideal components - ideal scales scores

Component	Academics	Employers	Alumni	Students	Combined
	n=118	n=64	n=29	n=129	n=340
1. employment related	4.54	4.06	4.45	4.37	4.38
2. hospitality industry operational skills	3.98	4.19	4.09	4.02	4.05
3. vocational preparation	4.61	4.46	4.51	4.40	4.50
4. personal/generic skills	4.46	4.27	4.32	4.23	4.33
5. course content	4.17	3.84	3.98	3.78	3.94
6. use of computers	4.16	3.96	4.06	4.23	4.14
7. influences on courses	3.61	3.68	3.73	4.00	3.78
8. assessment types	4.08	3.70	4.01	3.92	3.94
9. student centred processes	4.49	4.36	4.54	3.99	4.28
10. student learning experiences	4.41	4.04	4.25	4.22	4.25

An ANOVA analysis of the component based scores shown in table 17 was conducted.

The results are shown in table 18. The standardised difference was calculated using a similar procedure to that noted in section 9.2 *i.e.*

$$\frac{\textit{mean difference}}{\textit{mean standard deviation}}$$

The analysis indicated that, with the exception of components 2 and 4, there were significant differences between groups ($p = 0.05$). The comparative component based scores supported the notion of tensions between the various stakeholders, in their expectation of the ideal outcomes of the courses. This replicated the issues, discussed in Chapter 4, concerning the academic-vocational divide inherent in vocational higher education courses.

The two components where there seemed to be general agreement, were the two specifically related to skills acquisition. This, together with these being identified as

discrete components, emphasised that this aspect of the courses was viewed as distinct from other aspects.

Table 18: Differences between groups on ideal components – ideal scales scores

Component	F value significance	Groups showing a significant difference (p = 0.05)	Standardised difference
1. employment related	0.00	academics>employers, academics>students employers<alumni, employers<students	0.92 0.32 0.74 0.59
2. hospitality industry operational skills	0.28	none	
3. vocational preparation	0.01	academics>students	0.42
4. personal generic skills	0.06	none	
5. course content	0.00	academics>employers, academics>students	0.48 0.55
6. use of computers	0.04	employers<students	0.41
7. influences on courses	0.00	academics<students employers<students	0.49 0.41
8. specific assessment types	0.00	academics>employers	0.57
9. student centred processes	0.00	academics>students	0.78
10. student learning experiences	0.00	academics>employers, academics>students	0.64 0.34

In general, as was discussed in chapter 9, academic staff gave more highly rated responses to most items, and this was also reflected in the component based scores. Given the differing perspectives of the stakeholders, the differences found with the other components were to be expected. For instance, it is not surprising that the students responded more positively than academics to the component that included students' influences on courses. The standardised difference indicated a value at the top end of the small range. It was perhaps more surprising that the academics were much more positive than the students on the component related to student-centred processes, the standardised difference was very close to the high threshold.

The largest difference, and the only one with a standardised difference value in the high region, was between academics and employers in the component concerned with employment related issues. The fact that the academics gave a much higher rating than the employers suggests that the divide noted in chapter 4 concerning the tension between vocational and academic considerations is an important issue.

10.4 Principal component analysis of the actual scales

This section discusses the components identified from the actual scales.

10.4.1 Components identified from the actual scales

A similar approach to that used for the ideal scale components, as discussed in section 10.2, was used here. Nine components were identified and allocated an appropriate label. These are shown below. A summary of each of the variables, with significant loadings onto each component is shown in italics. The items are listed in descending order of their loading onto the component, The actual loadings are shown in brackets.

1. hospitality industry employment related

20a) have knowledge of the hotel sector of the hospitality industry (0.56)

40c) main focus of the course is attributes particularly suitable for hospitality industry (0.48)

42b) students experience lectures (0.48)

35a) theoretical parts of the course include marketing (0.47)

35f) theoretical parts of the course include marketing human resource management (0.46)

24. are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry (0.45)

20b) have knowledge of the restaurant sector of the hospitality industry (0.43)

13. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of facts, concepts, principles and theories relating to managing in the hospitality industry (0.40)

2. personal/generic skills

11 set personal targets and regularly review progress towards meeting them (0.60)

16a) plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working personally (0.54)

10 act independently in a way appropriate to the situation (0.51)

16b) plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working for others (0.50)

14b) interpret the significance of data/information in verbal/non-numerical form (0.48)

9 demonstrate the understanding and ability to apply general management principles in appropriate situations (0.47)

6 interact with other people as appropriate to the situation (0.42)

14a) interpret the significance of data/information in numerical form (0.40)

4 determine solutions to problems (0.39)

3. influences on course

38a) students are able to influence their course in respect of the content (0.82)

38b) students are able to influence their course in respect of the process (0.81)

38c) students are able to influence their course in respect of the method of assessment (0.77)

40b) main focus of the course is general attributes suitable for any employment (0.53)

39a) experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of the academic curriculum (0.48)

41 employers have a significant effect on course content (0.42)

40a) main focus of the course is personal development (0.42)

4. hospitality industry operational skills

19c) become competent in operational skills utilised in restaurant service (0.81)

19b) become competent in operational skills utilised in kitchen production (0.77)

39b)iii) experience the skills of restaurant operations (0.56)

19 become competent in operational skills utilised in the hospitality industry (0.54)

39b)ii) experience the skills of kitchen operations (0.52)

19a) become competent in operational skills utilised in reception (0.47)

31f) importance of assessment by practical tests (0.37)

5. use of computers

5b) make appropriate use of computers and their software for spreadsheets (0.78)

5c) make appropriate use of computers and their software for data bases (0.77)

5a) make appropriate use of computers and their software for word processing (0.72)

5e) make appropriate use of computers and their software for information retrieval (0.56)

5d) make appropriate use of computers and their software for booking systems (0.55)

6. aspects of assessment

31d) importance of assessment by written assignments (0.57)

31e) importance of assessment by reports (0.56)

31c) importance of assessment by seminar papers (0.52)

31a) importance of assessment by examinations (0.48)

32 some assessments are integrated across various subject areas (0.39)

28 assessments are in proportion to the learning time devoted to the topic being assessed (0.36)

31g) importance of assessment by dissertation (0.36)

7. course content

35b) theoretical parts of the course include foreign language(s) (0.69)

35a) theoretical parts of the course include marketing (0.63)

35c) theoretical parts of the course include financial accounting (0.58)

35e) theoretical parts of the course include nutrition (0.48)

35d) theoretical parts of the course include hygiene (0.44)

7 communicate in a major language other than English (0.43)

8. hospitality industry sectors

20c) have knowledge of the travel agency sector of the hospitality industry (0.62)

20f) have knowledge of the special event sector of the hospitality industry (0.61)

20e) have knowledge of the conference sector of the hospitality industry (0.58)

9. students experience

42h) students experience student presentations (0.67)

42f) students experience group activities (0.61)

31h) importance of assessment by oral presentations (0.58)

42 students experience a dissertation (0.55)

30 assessments are conducted in a variety of formats (0.55)

35i) theoretical parts of the course include research methods (0.46)

27 assessments cover the full range of specified learning outcomes (0.40)

As with the ideal scales, many components were not specifically connected with the hospitality industry. However three components do have that focus.

10.4.2 Group comparison of component scores based on actual scales

Table 19 shows the details of the component scores for the actual scales, computed as the mean response for items in that component.

Table 19: Actual components - actual scales scores

Component	Academics	Employers	Alumni	Students	Combined
	n=118	n=64	n=29	n=129	n=340
1. hospitality industry employment related	4.08	3.35	3.88	3.83	3.83
2. personal/generic skills	3.28	3.11	3.46	3.34	3.28
3. influences on courses	3.16	2.99	2.82	2.78	2.95
4. hospitality industry operational skills	3.34	3.32	3.57	3.08	3.26
5. use of computers	3.40	3.29	3.08	3.28	3.30
6. aspects of assessment	3.68	3.50	3.84	3.70	3.67
7. course content	3.21	2.78	3.12	2.86	2.99
8. hospitality industry sectors	2.61	2.65	2.26	2.48	2.53
9. students experience	4.09	3.30	3.74	3.37	3.64

An ANOVA analysis of the component based scores shown in table 19 was conducted.

The results are shown in table 20.

Table 20: Differences between groups on actual components - actual scales scores

Component	F value significance	Groups showing a significant difference (p = 0.05)	Standardised difference
1. hospitality industry employment related	.00	academics>employer, academics>students employers<alumni, employers<students	1.15 .40 .84 .76
2. personal/generic skills	.03	employers<alumni	.57
3. influence on course	.00	academics>students	.52
4. hospitality industry operational skills	.00	academics>students alumni>students	.35 .66
5. use of computers	.20	none	
6. aspects of assessment	.07	none	
7. course content	.00	academics>employer, academics>students	.56 .46
8. hospitality industry sectors	.17	none	
9. students experience	.00	academics>employer, academics>alumni academics>students employers<alumni alumni>students	1.10 .49 .99 .61 .50

The analysis indicated that, with the exception of components 5, 6 and 8, there were significant differences between groups (p = 0.05).

The component associated with the students' experience showed the most variation, with significant differences between each pair of groups except the employers and students. Large differences were noted between the academics, and both employers and students. The component associated with hospitality employment also showed some large differences between the academics and employers; and employers and the alumni. In addition, the employers and students differed to an extent at the top end of the medium range. The employers were much more negative in this regard than the other groups. This is important, as generally emphasis has been given to generic skills rather than subject specific ones. However, the relative lack of difference in the operational skills, does suggest that there is less of a problem with this area.

10.5 Comparison of the principal component analyses of the two scales

A comparison of the components derived from the two scales indicated a great deal of commonality. Although the variables contributing to each component were not identical, the general thrust of the components was similar. The major difference was that the actual scales generated a component that included a number of the specialised sectors. The ideal scales separated the component concerning students experience into two separate components, whereas from the actual scales only one component was identified in this area. The pattern of variables contributing to vocational preparation and related to employment, was also different. In addition, the variables loading onto the component concerning influence on the courses for the actual scales included some which were concerned with vocational preparation.

The commonality between the two sets of components suggests that, in general, the courses approach what is required. However, the differences also suggest that there is some difference in emphasis to what would be preferable. For example, there was a component related to the sectors of the hospitality industry from the actual scale analysis, but not from the ideal scale analysis. This indicates that although orientation towards the hospitality industry seems to be important, emphasis on differences within it were not seen as a key quality feature.

10.5.1 Comparison of component scores based on the components identified from the ideal scales

Computing component scores from the actual and ideal scale values based on the components identified in section 10.3.1, indicated that a significant difference existed between the two scales in each case ($p = 0.01$). The values are shown in table 21. These indicated that the general difference noted between the variables on the two

scales also applied to those variables that particularly contributed to the components identified. This confirmed the view that the courses were falling short of the expectations of the stakeholders.

10.5.2 Actual responses to the components identified from the ideal scales

Table 21 shows the details of the component scores calculated by applying the components derived from the ideal scales to both of the scales, and computing the mean response of the items.

Table 21: Ideal components: comparison of scores from ideal and actual scales

	Academics n=118		Employers n=64		Alumni n=29		Students n=129		Combined n=340	
	actual	**ideal**	**actual**	**ideal**	**actual**	**ideal**	**actual**	**ideal**	**actual**	**ideal**
1. employment related	3.77	4.54	3.20	4.06	3.57	4.45	3.51	4.37	3.55	4.38
2. hospitality industry operational skills	3.27	3.98	3.27	4.19	3.45	4.09	3.09	4.02	3.22	4.05
3. vocational preparation	4.09	4.61	3.51	4.46	3.64	4.51	3.63	4.40	3.77	4.50
4. personal/generic skills	3.16	4.46	3.17	4.27	3.42	4.32	3.31	4.23	3.24	4.33
5. course content	3.09	4.17	2.81	3.84	3.01	3.98	2.71	3.78	2.89	3.94
6. use of computers	3.40	4.16	3.29	3.96	3.08	4.06	3.28	4.23	3.30	4.14
7. influences on courses	2.80	3.61	2.68	3.68	2.47	3.73	2.47	4.00	2.63	3.78
8. assessment types	3.64	4.08	3.52	3.70	3.74	4.01	3.65	3.92	3.64	3.94
9. student centred processes	4.01	4.49	3.57	4.36	3.91	4.54	3.38	3.99	3.68	4.28
10. student learning experiences	3.83	4.41	3.58	4.04	3.77	4.25	3.55	4.22	3.67	4.25

These data are shown in graphical form in figure 3 (ideal scale scores) and figure 4 (actual scales scores) in chapter 11, pages 203 and 204. As was expected from the general lower values for the actual scales reported in chapter 9, using the actual scales resulted in lower values. However, a very similar pattern to that found when using the ideal scale values, was seen when using the actual scales. The component which showed least difference, when the two different scales were used, was component 8, the one concerned with assessment. The values are shown in table 21.

An ANOVA analysis of the ideal component based scores using the values from the actual scales, as shown in table 21, was carried out. This indicated that there were no significant differences between the stakeholder groups in components 2, 4, 6 and 8 ($p = 0.05$. Significant differences were noted for the other 6 components, ($p = 0.05$). A summary is shown in table 22.

Table 22: Differences between groups on ideal components – actual scales scores

Component	F value significance	Groups showing a significant difference (p = 0.05)	Standardised difference
1. employment related	.000	academics>employers academics>students employers<alumni employers<students	.903 .412 .586 .491
2. hospitality industry operational skills	.058	none	
3. vocational preparation	.000	academics>employers academics>alumni academics>students	.899 .698 .713
4. personal/generic skills	.066	none	
5. course content	.001	academics>students	.489
6. use of computers	.199	none	
7. influences on courses	.025	academics>students	.354
8. assessment types	.457	none	
9. student centred processes	.000	academics>employers academics>students alumni>students	.611 .875 .736
10. student learning experiences	.007	academics>students	.408

The academics generally gave more positive responses, and differed on several components from the employers and students groups. In particular, there was a large difference between them and the employers on their perception of component 1 (employment related). This adds another dimension to the effect noted above, that academics rated the employment related items as being more theoretically important than did the employers. It is possible that the employers, perceiving what they see as relatively low achievement in this area, have downgraded their expectation. The employers were also more negative than the alumni and students on component 1, with a difference in the medium range compared to the alumni and at the top end of the low range compared to the students.

The more positive view of the academics on this issue is reinforced by the responses to component 3 – vocational preparation. The academics showed a more positive response than the other groups with all differences being well up in the medium range.

A similar situation is seen with component 9 – student centred processes, with the notable exception that the alumni showed no significant difference compared to the academics.

Comparing the scores from the ideal and actual scales for these ideal components showed a significant difference for each component ($p = 0.001$). As can be seen in table 23, comparing the standardised difference using a similar procedure to that used previously *i.e.* dividing the difference by the standard deviation, indicated a large difference in all components for all groups, except for the component 8, concerning assessment types.

Table 23: Ideal components - standardised differences between ideal and actual scales scores

	Academics	Employers	Alumni	Students	Combined
1. employment related	1.12	1.25	1.29	1.26	1.21
2. hospitality industry operational skills	0.81	1.05	0.74	1.07	0.95
3. vocational preparation	0.79	1.45	1.31	1.18	1.10
4. personal generic skills	1.53	1.24	1.03	1.04	1.25
5. course content	1.16	1.10	1.03	1.15	1.13
6. use of computers	0.85	0.74	1.10	1.07	0.93
7. influences on courses	0.74	0.92	1.17	1.42	1.07
8. assessment types	0.65	0.27	0.39	0.39	0.45
9. student centred processes	0.63	1.05	0.84	0.81	0.79
10. student learning experiences	0.86	0.68	0.71	0.99	0.85

Comparing the difference between the scales across the groups and subjecting them to an ANOVA procedure gave the results shown in table 24.

Table 24 Standardised differences between groups' ideal and actual scales scores for ideal components

Component	F value significance	Groups showing a significant difference (p = 0.05)	Standardised difference
1. employment related	0.61	none	
2. hospitality industry operational skills	0.08	none	
3. vocational preparation	0.00	academics<employers academics<alumni academics<students	0.66 0.52 0.38
4. personal generic skills	0.00	academics>alumni academics>students	0.51 0.49
5. course content	0.94	none	
6. use of computers	0.09	none	
7. influences on courses	0.00	academics<students employers<students	0.67 0.50
8. assessment types	0.12	none	
9. student centred processes	0.08	none	
10. student learning experiences	0.37	none	

As can be seen from table 24, there was only a small number of differences between the various groups. Where there were differences, they were of small or moderate size. The differences were primarily related to skills. This links with the issue of dispute, concerning the importance of skills acquisition in vocational higher education, as discussed in chapter 4.

It seemed that although there was variation between the groups on the actual scales for the components identified from the ideal scales, when the two scales were directly compared, the variation between the groups was smaller. This suggests that expectations were matched to the outcomes to some extent. This implied that the various groups may have modified their expectations, to be more in line with what they perceived the outcomes to be.

10.6 Secondary principal component analysis

Secondary principal component analysis was carried out on the two sets of component scores. The loadings into the component are shown in table 25 (ideal) and table 26 (actual), they are shown in descending order of loadings.

Table 25: Loadings of the ideal component scores on the single component identified by secondary principal component analysis

Component score label and number	Loading (descending order)
3. vocational preparation	0.80
1. employment related	0.80
10. student learning experiences	0.73
5. course content	0.68
6. use of computers	0.66
8. assessment types	0.65
9. student centred processes	0.63
4 . personal generic skills	0.60
2. hospitality industry operational skills	0.57
7. influences on courses	0.53

Table 26 Loadings of the actual component scores on the single component identified by secondary principal component analysis

Component score label and number	Loading (descending order)
1. hospitality industry employment related	0.78
9. students experience	0.72
2. generic personal skills	0.70
3. influence on course	0.67
6. aspects of assessment	0.66
4. hospitality industry operational skills	0.64
7. course content	0.62
8. specialised hospitality management sectors	0.56
5. computer related	0.52

The secondary principal component analyses carried out on the two sets of component scores each yielded only one component, according to the SPSS analysis. The scree test confirmed this was appropriate in each case. All of the components identified by the primary analysis loaded significantly onto this one component in each case.

This suggested, that although the different facets could be identified, there was an underlying coherence in both cases. The context in which the questionnaire was administered was concerned with the quality of hospitality management courses. Consequently, it could be concluded that the variables contributing towards the various components were all involved in determining this quality.

A reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha (α), (Bryman & Cramer, 2001) carried out on the component scores from the ideal scales produced an α of 0.85. Omitting component 7 left the value unchanged. Omitting any other component score reduced the α value. Similarly the component scores from the actual scales produced an α of 0.82. Omitting any of the component scores decreased this.

These α values suggested a high level of consistency (Bryman & Cramer, 2001).

10.7 Summary

The factor analysis procedure determined that the items selected for the questionnaire could be divided into a number of components in relation to quality evaluation of hospitality management education. The single component identified from secondary factor analysis, when this was applied to each set of components, confirmed that the components were all related in representing aspects of the same conceptual area. These components represented a range of facets concerned with the content of the courses, how they were organised and the outcomes linked to the purpose of the courses. This confirms the view from the literature, that quality in higher education, especially vocational higher education, is complex.

Using the ideal components as a basis for comparison suggested that academics were:

a) generally more demanding of the courses, as evidenced by the ideal scores

b) generally more satisfied than the employers , as evidenced by the actual scores.

The components identified from the actual scales were conceptually similar to those from the ideal scales. However, there were some discrepancies. This suggested that some change in emphasis could move the stakeholders' actual perception closer to the ideal.

Chapter 11: Summary and conclusions

The original hypothesis which formed the basis of the research question noted in section 1.1, and on which the empirical research was based, was that it would be possible to establish criteria which would be required as part of a good quality hospitality management course. This was considered from the perspective of various stakeholders. A further aim was to establish the views of the stakeholders with regard to the extent to which this was being achieved. The research indicated variation between various stakeholders, and also generally that courses were not producing graduates with the appropriate attributes as judged by the stakeholders thus confirming the hypotheses.

This chapter outlines the main findings of the empirical research, and relates them to information found during the literature research on other related studies. In the light of this some comments and conclusions regarding hospitality management courses and their quality are made. Observations on the strengths and weaknesses of the research reported here, and suggestions for possible future research are also included.

11.1 Findings from the current study

The mean values from the two scales were discussed in detail in chapter 9. Considering the data from all the respondents together, the highest values were found on the ideal scales, and the lowest values were all found on the actual scales. No items had the actual value matching the ideal value on the combined scales, and most were a long way from it. This was not surprising, as it might be expected that respondents when asked to give an "ideal" rating would aspire higher than might be achievable in practice. This also corresponds to similar findings by *e.g.* Nabi & Bagley (1999); and Hesketh, (2000).

There was some variation between groups on the emphasis that should be given to specific items as rated on the ideal scale. This tended to be a difference in emphasis rather than a contradiction. So although a considerable number of items showed a significant difference between groups, more striking was the overall similarity between the groups. The differences were mainly because a particular group had a similar but more extreme view to the group with which it differed.

The ideal scales were designed to indicate how people valued the items as contributors to the quality of hospitality management courses. The items valued most highly using the combined data were primarily concerned with vocational skills, both generic and specific hospitality management vocational ones. Table 27 shows the items with a high means on the combined ideal scale, and for the separate stakeholder groups ideal scales. Also shown are the combined means from the actual scales and the combined standardised differences. The standardised differences were calculated as described in section 8.4, using the following formula:

$$\frac{\textit{mean ideal} - \textit{mean actual}}{(\textit{SD ideal} + \textit{SD actual})/2}$$

Table 27: Items with high means on ideal scales

Items with mean ≥ 4.5 (using the combined data) descending order of combined ideal mean							
Item number and summary	**combined ideal**	**combined actual**	**standardised difference**	**academics ideal**	**employers ideal**	**alumni ideal**	**students ideal**
35h) theory management .	4.67	3.92	0.92	4.80	4.50	4.79	4.62
24 equipped to gain hospitality industry employment	4.65	3.97	0.87	4.87	4.44	4.76	4.52
12 work effectively as a team member	4.64	3.81	1.03	4.68	4.66	4.86	4.55
6 interact with other people	4.61	3.62	1.29	4.76	4.62	4.69	4.46
36 students given extra support when in difficulties	4.58	3.12	1.58	4.69	4.46	4.69	4.51
2 utilise information to make decisions	4.56	3.50	1.46	4.74	4.54	4.66	4.37
39b) students experience skills of hospitality industry during work experience	4.56	4.02	0.62	4.67	4.57	4.67	4.43
35f) theory human resource management	4.53	3.92	0.69	4.73	4.40	4.41	4.45

Table 27: Items with high means on ideal scales (continued)

1a) ability to use written English	4.52	3.54	1.32	4.67	4.41	4.69	4.39
39 students experience skills of hospitality industry as part of course	4.52	3.62	1.00	4.60	4.55	4.61	4.40
37 students undertake work experience	4.51	4.15	0.38	4.67	4.52	4.40	4.38
1b) ability to use spoken English	4.50	3.61	1.14	4.59	4.53	4.66	4.36

A distinctive feature of hospitality management courses is the period of work experience. Most respondents in all stakeholder groups rated the inclusion of an extended period of work experience as an important quality feature of the course. When asked to quantify the duration of this work experience, 66.7% of the respondents indicated that twelve months was the preferred duration. Curiously, the subject benchmark statements (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a) are not prescriptive in this area, which seems to be a weakness. As 89.6% of respondents indicated that a period of 6 months or longer was the optimal duration of the work experience, it seems unlikely that any course without an extended work placement could be considered high quality

Most specific subjects and processes were relatively less highly regarded, although all items were rated well above the midpoint of the ideal scales. No items were rated below 3.0 on the ideal scale. The variety and extent of these items considered as important to the quality of the courses, reinforces the view that quality in this area is complex and multi-faceted.

The actual scales were considered as indicators of the perception of the stakeholders of the extent that courses were achieving in respect of the various items. The items that received the highest ratings on the actual scales included a number of process items. The means on the actual scales were lower than on the ideal scales. Only three items were given a combined mean on the actual scales of ≥ 4.0. These are shown on Table 28. The combined ideal mean and the standardised difference are also shown.

Table 28: Items with combined actual means ≥ 4.0

Item number and summary	combined ideal	combined actual	standardised difference	academics actual	employers actual	alumni actual	students actual
31d) assessment written assignments	4.36	4.12	0.30	4.23	3.67	4.17	4.21
31g) assessment dissertation	4.28	4.09	0.21	4.29	3.66	4.46	4.02
39b) experience skills of hospitality industry during work experience	4.56	4.02	0.62	4.31	3.86	3.96	3.82

Table 29 shows the items with low means on the combined actual scales (≥ 3.0); the combined ideal mean and standardised difference for each item are also shown.

Table 29: Items with low means on actual scales

Items with mean ≥ 3.0 (using the combined data): ascending order of combined actual mean							
Item number and summary	**combined ideal**	**combined actual**	**standardised difference**	**academics actual**	**employers actual**	**alumni actual**	**students actual**
7 communicate in another language	3.63	2.10	1.44	3.45	2.12	1.96	2.23
20c) knowledge of travel agency	3.38	2.19	1.08	2.24	1.82	1.82	2.33
35b) theory foreign language	3.71	2.37	1.13	2.30	2.63	2.18	2.72
41 employers affect course content	3.89	2.59	1.26	2.76	2.71	2.29	2.41
38a) students influence course content	3.79	2.62	1.07	2.89	2.64	2.24	2.46
38c) students influence method of assessment	3.62	2.62	1.12	2.66	2.87	2.77	2.47
20f) knowledge of special events	3.93	2.66	1.31	2.77	2.87	2.44	2.51
35e) theory nutrition	3.57	2.66	0.79	2.83	2.87	2.93	2.36
20d) knowledge of fast food	3.49	2.68	0.73	3.00	2.44	2.64	2.49
20e) knowledge of conference	3.96	2.72	1.21	2.88	2.89	3.57	2.55
38b) students influence process	3.85	2.75	1.12	2.91	2.91	2.63	2.57
19a) competent in reception skills	4.00	2.81	1.18	3.11	2.95	2.59	2.56
31b) assessment open book examinations	3.36	2.87	0.44	2.83	3.16	2.67	2.86
5d) use computers for booking systems	3.94	2.88	1.02	3.09	2.97	2.64	2.70
35g) theory law	4.05	2.95	1.05	3.11	3.14	3.03	2.71
19b) competent in kitchen skills	4.00	2.81	0.87	3.11	2.95	2.59	2.56
5c) use computers for data bases	3.91	3.00	0.93	2.96	3.14	2.66	3.04

The lower rated items included several of the skills related items, as well as items involving other aspects. This connects with the academic-vocational debate discussed in section 4.2. An academic course has to fulfil academic criteria that may conflict with, and downgrade, vocational requirements. Also related to this issue is the

perceived lack of influence of stakeholders other than the academics, indicated by the low values on the actual scales for the items concerned with this aspect (in brackets).

38a) students influence course content (2.62)
38b) students influence process (2.75)
38c) students influence method of assessment (2.62)
41 employers affect course content (2.59)

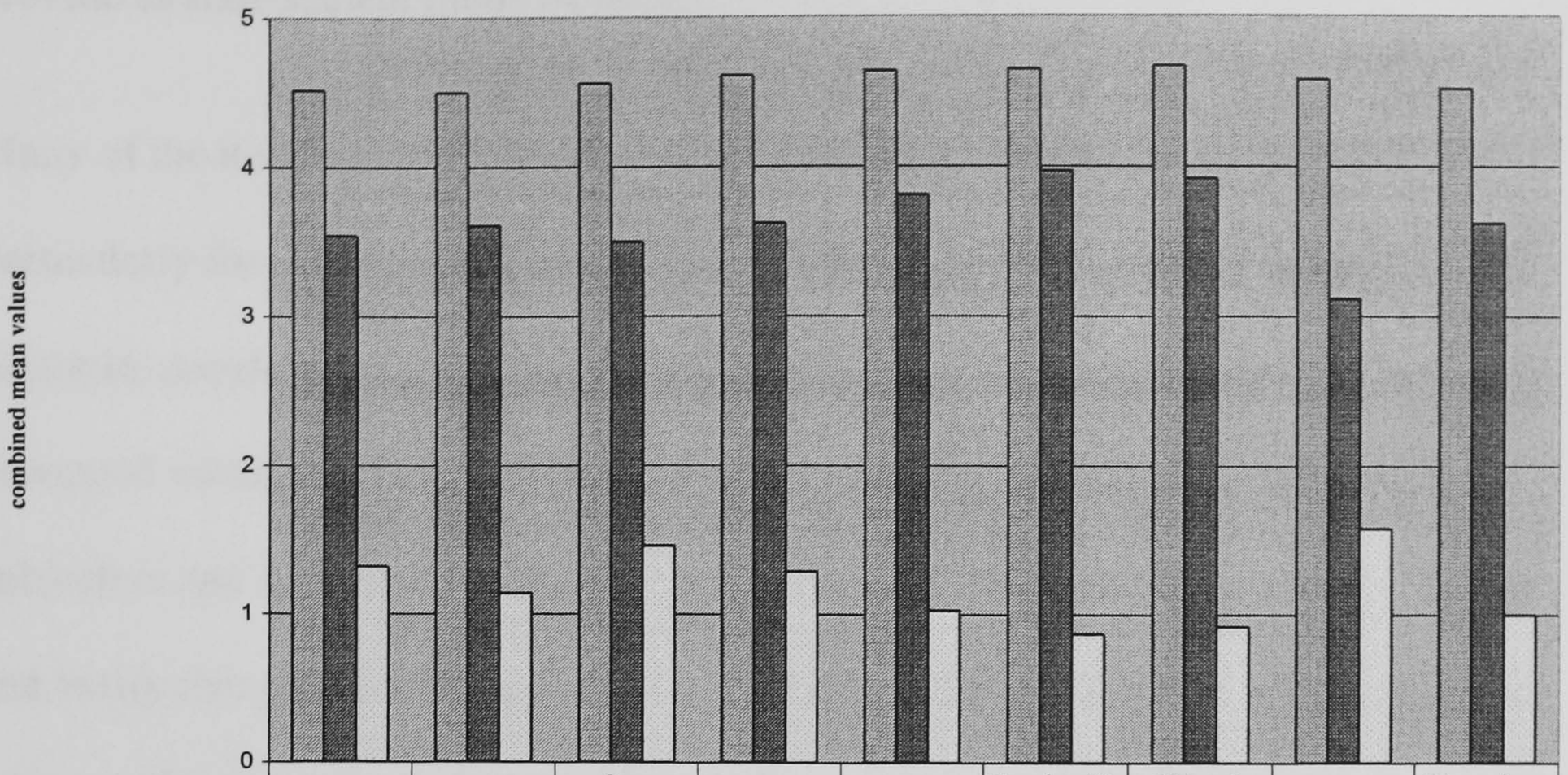
There was a substantial difference between the ideal and actual scale for every item, and 41.1% had a standardised difference ≥.1.0. The largest differences were in the generic items.

There is a general assumption that personal and generic skills are transferable between contexts (*e.g.* Dearing, 1997). It is likely that the majority of respondents accepted this theory when rating the items on the ideal scale. However, as discussed in section 4.4, several authors have questioned this hypothesis (*e.g.* Billet, 2001). The low actual values for several generic items may support this contrary view. That is, it is not so much that students fail to acquire these skills, rather, that even if acquired they are not easily transferred to a new context.

Generally speaking a low ideal value was matched by a low actual value. One possible explanation for this is that there is a general tendency to think that items have not reached the level that is preferred. Having indicated a level on the ideal scale a lower level on the actual scale is used. Another possibility is that when resources are limited the items seen as relatively less important get squeezed out or at least downplayed.

As described in section 9.3.3, nine items scored highly on the ideal scale (≥ 4.5), and showed a large (as defined by Cohen, 1988) standardised difference (> 0.8) between the two scales. The items to which this applied were primarily skills items. They included two items specifically related to hospitality management. Figure 2 shows the items with associated ideal means, actual means and standardised differences.

Figure 2: Items with a high ideal mean and a large standardised difference



	1a) written English	1b) spoken English	2 use information to make decisions	6 interact with people	12 work in a team	24 equipped for hospitality employment	35h) study management theory	36 given extra support	39 experience hospitality skills
ideal	4.52	4.5	4.56	4.61	4.64	4.65	4.67	4.58	4.52
actual	3.54	3.61	3.5	3.62	3.81	3.97	3.92	3.12	3.62
standardised difference	1.32	1.14	1.46	1.29	1.03	0.87	0.92	1.58	1

The items in questionnaire order, were:

1a) ability to use clearly written English
1b) ability to use clearly spoken English
2 ability to utilise information to make decisions
6 ability to interact with other people
12 ability to work effectively in a team
24 students are equipped for employment in the hospitality industry
35h) theory of management
36 students given extra support
39 students experience hospitality industry skills during their course

Despite the fact that all students on hospitality management course experience hospitality industry skills, the large difference between the scales suggest more emphasis is needed. The emphasis seems to be linking the hospitality industry skills with the academic aspects of the course. The experience of hospitality skills during work experience:

39b) Student experience the skills of hospitality industry operations during work experience

had a much lower standardised difference between the scales of .62

The only item concerned with the educational process which falls into this category was the one concerned with students support. The issue of extra support for students is

increasingly important due to widening access, but increasingly more difficult to provide as staff-student ratios increase.

Many of the items are problematic for inclusion in teaching programmes and particularly for assessment and represent challenging areas for higher education. For example, people interaction, team working and decision making opportunities can be presented within learning activities. However, assessment of them is problematic, subjective and difficult to quantify. This means staff are unable to provide evidence and verify that such a learning outcome has been achieved, or even indicate precisely where and how it was assessed. As is discussed in section 2.4, lack of reliable quantification tends to lead to a reduction in importance. It may lead to its removal from the list of learning outcomes to avoid difficulties with external examiners or other scrutineers. As a consequence, making improvements in this area may be difficult.

In a comparison of groups, academics tended to show higher differences between ideal and actual which seemed to be partly because of higher ideal ratings. This was especially true of generic skills. More research would be needed to investigate why academics perceive that their students are not achieving adequately. Possibilities include low staff-student ratios and lowering standards of student intake with regard to commitment and academic capability. Academics seemed more content with process items where the differences between ideal and actual scales were lower. The exception was the resource intensive one of support for students with difficulties.

The employers indicated a larger difference than the other groups for the hospitality industry operational skills items. Many generic skills also had a major difference which was also where the alumni indicated the largest differences.

The students indicated large differences for the hospitality industry operational items, as well as some generic items. A number of process items were also rated with a large difference between the scales.

The principal components analysis suggested that it was possible to identify a number of components that encapsulated the variety of what was considered aspects of the quality of hospitality management courses. This range of these components is a reflection of the variety of facets of hospitality management higher education. It reinforces the point established in earlier chapters of the complexity of vocational higher education.

The ideal scales yielded 10 components, and a similar pattern was seen with the actual scales, that yielded 9 components.

The 10 components identified from the ideal scales were:

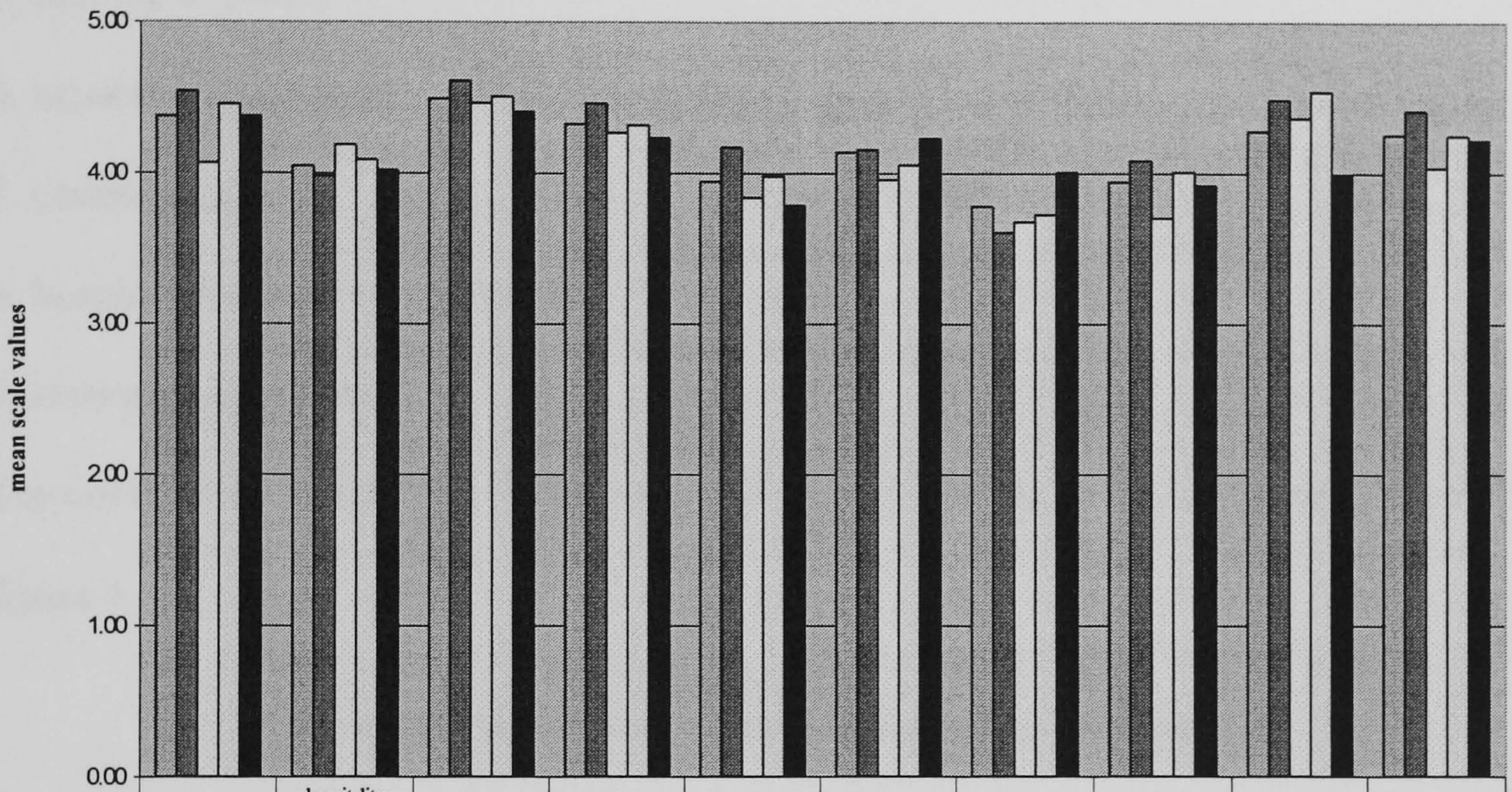
1. employment related (also included some general assessment variables)
2. hospitality industry operational skills
3. vocational preparation
4. personal/generic skills
5. course content
6. use of computers
7. influences on courses
8. assessment types
9. student centred processes
10. student learning experiences

The labels were chosen to try and reflect the predominate aspects of the component and a number of them reflected the vocational orientation of the courses. Personal and generic skills formed a separate component. Although these are often viewed as a key

part of preparing for employment (Dearing, 1997), this relies on a transferability which has tended to be assumed rather than demonstrated (Billett, 2001), as discussed in section 4.4. However, this prevailing assumption of transferability was probably made by the large majority of respondents.

The component scores from these components applied to the ideal scales are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Component scores for ideal components using ideal scales



	employment related	hospitality industry operational skills	vocational preparation	personal/generic skills	course content	use of computers	influences on courses	assessment types	student centred processes	student learning experiences
Combined	4.38	4.05	4.50	4.33	3.94	4.14	3.78	3.94	4.28	4.25
Academics	4.54	3.98	4.61	4.46	4.17	4.16	3.61	4.08	4.49	4.41
Employers	4.06	4.19	4.46	4.27	3.84	3.96	3.68	3.70	4.36	4.04
Alumni	4.45	4.09	4.51	4.32	3.98	4.06	3.73	4.01	4.54	4.25
Students	4.37	4.02	4.40	4.23	3.78	4.23	4.00	3.92	3.99	4.22

The difference between groups on the mean values was replicated on the components derived from the ideal scales. As detailed in section 10.3.2, table 18, significant differences ($p = 0.05$) were found between the different groups for 8 of the 10 components, the exceptions being the components concerned with skills. With the exception of the component concerned with influences on courses, the academics gave higher ratings than employers where significant differences were found. The biggest standardised difference was between academics and employers on the employment

related component. This lends weight to the view that employers have a narrower perception of required employment skills than academics.

The nine components identified from the actual scales were:

1. hospitality industry employment related

2. personal/generic skills

3. influences on course

4. hospitality industry operational skills

5. use of computers

6. aspects of assessment

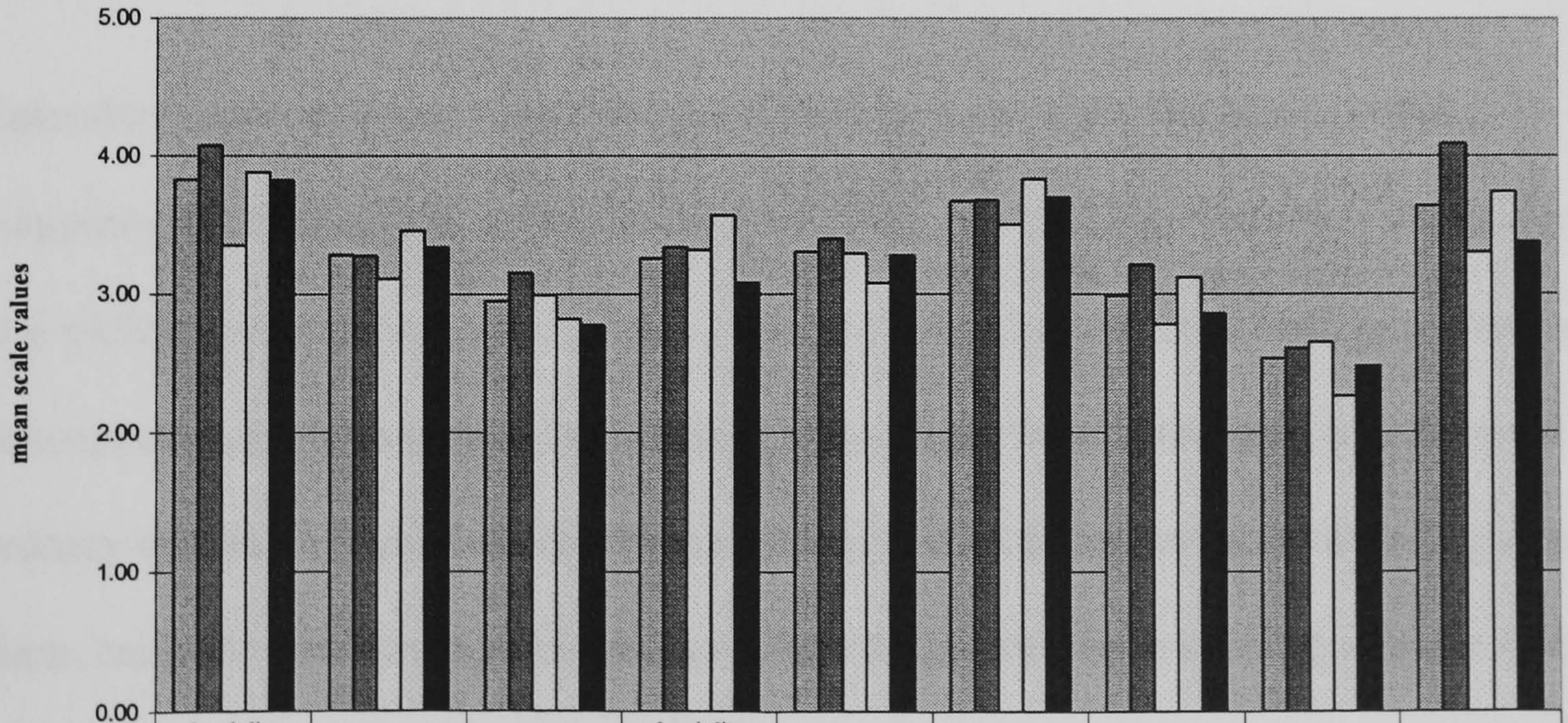
7. course content

8. hospitality industry sectors

9. students experience

The component scores from these components applied to the actual scales are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Component scores for actual components using actual scales



	hospitality industry employment	personal/generic skills	influences on courses	hospitality industry operational skills	use of computers	aspects of assessment	course content	hospitality industry sectors	students experience
Combined	3.83	3.28	2.95	3.26	3.30	3.67	2.99	2.53	3.64
Academics	4.08	3.28	3.16	3.34	3.40	3.68	3.21	2.61	4.09
Employers	3.35	3.11	2.99	3.32	3.29	3.50	2.78	2.65	3.30
Alumni	3.88	3.46	2.82	3.57	3.08	3.84	3.12	2.26	3.74
Students	3.83	3.34	2.78	3.08	3.28	3.70	2.86	2.48	3.37

As detailed in section 10.4.2, significant differences ($p = 0.05$) were found between groups except for the components concerned with computer use, assessment and hospitality industry sectors.

The similarity between the components derived from two scales, provided some confirmation that the areas identified were the ones that were the defining aspects of quality, in the context under investigation. The connection of employment with hospitality, on the actual scales, underscores the orientation of the courses towards this specific vocational niche.

Most of the components were generic, rather than specific to the hospitality industry. However, as the questionnaire was administered in the context of hospitality management courses, caution is needed before suggesting the findings might be extrapolated beyond these parameters. The various stakeholders groups varied in their views. This applied to both the importance of various items in the quality of hospitality management courses, and in their perception of how they were manifested in the graduates of such courses.

Secondary factor analysis suggested that there was a commonality between the components from the primary factor analysis. Only one secondary analysis component was yielded in each case. From this, it could be concluded that there was an underlying concept of quality connecting the various facets. The components identified from the primary analysis of the ideal responses, and the variables that loaded most highly onto them, could be used as the basis for an evaluation questionnaire for such courses. This would allow a shorter questionnaire to be produced than was used in this study. Using the items from the ideal scales that loaded onto each component at a value > 0.5 would produce a questionnaire of 39 items compared to the 90 used for the questionnaire in the study.

The items, in questionnaire order, are shown in table 30. The component onto which they loaded during the principal component analysis, discussed in section 10.3.1 is indicated. The value of the loading onto that component, is also given.

Table 30: Highest loading components from the ideal scales

Item number and summary	Component label	Loading
5a) use computers for word processing	use of computers	0.70
5b) use computers for spreadsheets	use of computers	0.78
5c) use computers for data bases	use of computers	0.70
5d) use computers for booking systems	use of computers	0.53
5e) use computers for information retrieval	use of computers	0.56
7 major language other than English	course content	0.61
10 act independently	personal/generic skills	0.55
11 set personal targets	personal/generic skills	0.70
14b) interpret non-numerical information	personal/generic skills	0.58
16a) plan modes of working personally	personal/generic skills	0.59
16b) plan modes of working for others	personal/generic skills	0.59
17 achieve an adequate level of numeracy	personal/generic skills	0.52
19a) become competent in reception	hospitality industry operational skills	0.59
19b). become competent kitchen	hospitality industry operational skills	0.59
19c) become competent restaurant	hospitality industry operational skills	0.68
23 concepts for higher management	employment related and general assessment	0.51
25 have qualities for jobs outside the hospitality industry	employment related and general assessment	0.62
26a) have developed the skills needed for continuing personal development	employment related and general assessment	0.55
28 assessment in proportion to the learning time	employment related and general assessment	0.58)
29 ensure that all students reach a minimum standard in all assessed areas	employment related and general assessment	0.56

Table 30: Highest loading components from the ideal scales (continued)

31a) assessment examinations	assessment types	0.59
31b) assessment open book examinations	assessment types	0.54
31h) assessment oral presentations	student centred processes	0.66
35b) theory foreign language	course content	0.77
35d) theory hygiene	course content	0.53
35e) theory nutrition	course content	0.69
35f) theory human resource management	course content	0.63
35h) theory management	course content	0.57
38a) students influence course content	influences on courses	0.79
38b) students influence course process	influences on courses	0.78
38c) students influence course assessment	influences on courses	0.83
39. experience hospitality industry operations as part of their course	vocational preparation	0.59
39b) experience hospitality industry operations during work experience	influences on courses	0.62
39bi) experience hospitality industry operations reception	hospitality industry operational skills	0.68
39bii) experience hospitality industry operations kitchen	hospitality industry operational skills	0.68
39biii) experience hospitality industry operations restaurant	hospitality industry operational skills	0.76
42c) students experience seminars	student learning experiences	0.68
42b) students experience lectures	student learning experiences	0.60
42d) students experience tutorials	student learning experiences	0.53

However, as can be seen from table 30, the number of items involved would mean that that the reduced questionnaire would still be a complex instrument. This complexity would be required, to attempt to capture the variety of what were regarded as quality aspects of the courses.

11.2 Comparison of the current research findings with other sources

This section reviews the current research and compares the findings with material published elsewhere. The literature discussed in chapter 2,3 and 4 is compared, followed by a comparison with the QAA subject benchmarks for unit 25, and a comparison with the specific related studies discussed in section 4.7. The data for the current study were collected early in 2000, using a questionnaire devised in 1998/9. The studies used for comparison were published during a similar time frame. Where appropriate, questionnaire items are identified by item number and are in italics, with the ideal scale mean value given in brackets.

11.2.1 Comparison with the literature

The literature discussed in chapter 2 emphasised the intricate nature of the concept of quality in higher education. The current research confirmed that hospitality management higher education fitted into this general view of higher education by suggesting the considerable complexity of the notion of quality, in the context of hospitality management higher education. It was found, during the development of the questionnaire, that the opinions of what were important attributes ranged over a number of aspects. These included skills, subjects taught, assessment of achievement, processes and procedures used, and learning outcomes. Even after factor analysis had been used to simplify the data, a large number of components were identified as contributing to the quality of hospitality management higher education courses.

The literature put a good deal of emphasis on the context in which the quality evaluation was taking place. As the current research was conducted in one specific context it was not possible to determine to what extent the responses were driven by

the context. However, the work done to identify items for the questionnaire indicated the importance of the context.

The literature also emphasises the need to determine the purpose of the courses, and the fact that there may be several different purposes. The fitness of the purpose for a vocational course is connected to the employment of the graduates in the vocational area associated with the courses. Therefore, preparation for a specific area of employment would seem to be a key indicator of the quality of vocational higher education. The importance of this was emphasised in the current study in respect of hospitality management courses, with the item relating to this being given a combined ideal mean of 4.65. The fairly high ideal combined rating (4.21) given to:

25. Graduates have the necessary qualities to apply for jobs outside the hospitality industry

suggests that stakeholders see wider vocational preparation as an important purpose, Employers, perhaps not surprisingly, rather less so, giving an ideal rating of 3.80. However, the item:

24. are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry

was rated more highly both overall (4.65) and by all groups considered separately.

Many of the outcomes of vocational courses seen as important by various authors, were generically related to employment, rather than specific to particular vocational areas. The generic items in the current research were generally highly rated, suggesting they were important to the stakeholders and indicating a similarity to the literature. Many of the generic items rated highly were the ones identified as such in the literature, and the ones most difficult to teach and assess such as those concerned with people interaction. There is a tension in vocational courses identified in the literature as discussed in chapter 4. This tension concerns the extent to which skills acquisition should be included, but generally generic skills are seen as the important skills to be acquired in university. The current research indicated that the various stakeholders all

considered skills acquisition as important. This included generic skills but also applied to specific hospitality operational skills, whereas in the literature these are generally considered of lesser importance. This might suggest a greater emphasis on specific skills in hospitality management compared to other industries. Alternatively it might be a reflection that many other authors have looked at general aspects of employment. However, Hesketh (2000) compared various industry sectors and claimed similar findings irrespective of the sector.

11.2.2 Comparison with the QAA benchmarks

The decision by the QAA to develop sets of benchmarks for various subject areas was a key development (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 1998). As discussed in chapter 3, there are conceptual and practical problems with the introduction of benchmarking into higher education. An important issue is that the self-evaluative variant is not the one that has been adopted. However, given the prominence given to this by the QAA, the use of the benchmarks is likely to remain important.

The varying concepts of benchmarking, discussed in detail in chapter 3, do have some resonance in higher education. There is a long tradition of making public, through publications and conferences, innovations and ideas which improve higher education. However, the QAA process of comparison against fixed points of reference is alien to the tradition of subjective overview by fellow professionals through the external examiner and validation systems. Some vocational courses have been nearer to the QAA process if they were subject to professional or statutory body accreditation.

The QAA benchmarking process was not introduced until after the survey had been completed. Consequently the impact of the process was not part of the research.

However, the benchmark statements for the hospitality subject area, discussed in section 3.6 (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a) were an important development. It was the first time that anything resembling an official document, indicating what was expected of a graduate in this discipline, had been published.

A key aspect of the benchmark statements is as part of the quality assurance process for the relevant courses, and so it was felt appropriate to compare the findings from the current research to the statements. As was discussed in section 3.6, the areas covered by the benchmarks cover a wide range, and the large majority of the statements appeared in some form in the questionnaire. In view of the learning outcomes approach adopted by the benchmarking group, course processes were not really included in the benchmarks. A tabulated comparison of the two can be seen in table 31.

Table 31: Matching of subject benchmark statements with questionnaire items

QAA subject benchmark statement (Unit 25)	Related item number
General	
...the study of the management and technical disciplines relevant to hospitality	8, 35a) to h)
...the study of hospitality with an emphasis on management	35h)
Components	
the management of technical operations such as food and beverage and accommodation	16b)
the management disciplines within the context of hospitality	35h)
the hospitality industry and its global environment	
the hospitality consumer and the service encounter	6, 19a), 19b), 19c), 39b)i), 39b)ii)
the opportunity to participate in a period of industrial placement	37
Typical subject areas	
food and beverage production and service	19b), 19c), 39b)ii), 39b)iii)
facilities management	19e), 39b)iv)
design and planning	
food safety	35d)

Table 31: Matching of subject benchmark statements with questionnaire items (continued

quality assurance	
food science and microbiology	35d), 35e)
operations management	13, 35h)
human resources management	35f)
law	35g)
services marketing	35a)
consumer behaviour	35a)
financial management	3, 35c)
organisational behaviour	35f)
strategic management	23, 35h)
small business management	35h)
Entrepreneurship	
information technology	5a) to f)
Additional subjects	
Languages	7, 35b),
licensed retail	
tourism	
leisure management	
Knowledge and skills	
Knowledge – graduates will be able to demonstrate:	
critical understanding of the development of knowledge in their subject domain	13
an understanding of the need for both a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach to study	32
their understanding of the subject through both academic and professional reflective practice	
their research and problem-solving abilities by critically understanding methods of acquiring, interpreting and analysing information appropriate to their context of study	14a), 14b), 42g)
an understanding and critical awareness of, the moral , ethical, environmental and legal issues which underpin best practice	18
Intellectual skills – graduates are able to:	
research and assess subject specific facts, theories, paradigms, principles and concepts	15, 35i)
critically assess and evaluate evidence	14a), 14b, 42g)
critically interpret data and text	3, 14a), 14b
describe and analyse information	2
apply knowledge to the solution of familiar and unfamiliar problems	4
develop a reasoned argument and challenge assumptions	42g)
take responsibility for their own learning and continuing professional development	10, 11, 16a), 26, 40a)
Skills specific to Unit 25 – graduates will be able to do some or all:	
plan, design and execute practical activities	19
undertake fieldwork	42g)
plan, design, execute and communicate a sustained piece of intellectual work	42g)

Table 31: Matching of subject benchmark statements with questionnaire items (continued

recognise and respond to moral, ethical and safety issues	18
Key skills	
communication and presentation	1a), 1b)
numeracy	17
computer and information technology	5a) to f)
problem solving	4
ability to self-appraise and reflect on practice	26a), 26b)
ability to plan and manage learning	11
Approaches to programmes of study - management programmes should enable the students to:	
demonstrate vocationally relevant managerial skills and knowledge by exposure to professional practice	39, 39a), 39b)
evaluate and apply vocationally relevant concepts associated with the operational and strategic management of resources	24, 25, 40b), 40c)
Industrial placement	37
Assessment - chosen to provide evidence of achievement of learning outcomes	27, 28, 29, 30,31a) to h)
Learning and teaching methods – typically	
Lectures	42b)
Tutorials	42d)
laboratory practicals	(rarely included)
other small group formats	42c), 42f)
directed reading	42e)
Subject specific guidelines **A typical honours graduate will be able to:**	
use technical and interpersonal skills and knowledge to propose and evaluate practical and theoretical solutions to complex problems in the core areas of hospitality	2, 4, 6, 9 40c)
recognise and value the centrality of the hospitality consumer and meet and respond to their needs	
identify and respond appropriately to the diversity that prevails within the hospitality in relation to stakeholders	13, 20
evaluate and apply, within the hospitality context, appropriate theories and concepts from generic management areas	9, 13
analyse and evaluate the defining characteristics of hospitality as a phenomenon	
analyses and evaluate the business environment and its impact on the hospitality industry	35j)

The similarity between the items chosen and the benchmarks is perhaps not surprising. The composition of the benchmarking group consisted of academics concerned with delivering related courses. Nevertheless, the similarity provided corroboration of the items chosen for the questionnaire. The benchmarks for Unit 25 were shared with a

range of other subject areas, *viz*: tourism, leisure and sport. Consequently, it was inevitable that the format and the form of words would be less focussed, than that which had been adopted for the questionnaire in the current research. However, the distinguishing of separate generic items, some vocational and some not, from vocationally specific ones, mirrored what had been identified in the development of the questionnaire.

There was some emphasis in the benchmarks in their vocational origin and emphasis. This was strongly endorsed by the research reported here with the high ideal ratings for the vocational items. The omission of work experience as a mandatory requirement in the benchmarks is not supported by the results reported here. A distinctive feature of hospitality management courses is the period of work experience. Most respondents in all stakeholder groups rated the inclusion of an extended period of work experience as an important quality feature of the course. When asked to quantify the duration of this work experience, 66.7% of the respondents indicated that twelve months was the preferred duration. The subject benchmark statements (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a) are not prescriptive in this area, which seems to be a weakness. As 89.6% of respondents indicated that a period of 6 months or longer was the optimal duration of the work experience, it seems unlikely that any course without an extended work placement could be considered high quality.

11.2.3 Comparison with other related studies

A number of studies have been published in the last two years since the current study was designed and executed, that have links to the current research. These studies are outlined in section 4.5. With the exception of the CHME study (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001), these studies are not specifically concerned with hospitality management. They do however, look at the issue of graduate skills and

their importance, and thus have direct links with the research reported here. These studies were used because of their dates of publication. These suggested that the data had been collected in approximately the same time frame as the current research. Aspects of the studies have been discussed in section 4.5. This section concentrates upon how the specific findings compare to those found in the current study.

The studies considered were outlined in section 4.7.

a) Nabi & Bagley, 1999

This study of graduate perceptions used a procedure of two five-point scales similar to the current study. Graduates were asked to rate their perceptions of skills in terms of their importance and the actual proficiency acquired by the graduates.

The items specified were not generally directly comparable with the current study, although the general area was similar. The results were similar to that found for the student group in the current study. Some discrepancy was found with the alumni group, particularly with regard to information technology skills. In the Nabi & Bagley study information technology skills were found not to be highly achieved, whereas in the current study the graduate ability in this area was rated highly by the alumni. It is possible that this could be explained by different emphasis to this aspect being given on different courses.

b) De la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber, 2000

The research was based on generic skills important to business graduates. De la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber claimed that although these generic skills can be identified, learning them in context was more likely to be effective. This implies that although these skills have elements that are required across a range of employments, they also contain an

element of specificity when actually developed. This appears to link with the high rating of specific vocational aspects in the current research, many of which have a substantial generic skills element.

There was a considerable similarity between the skills that de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber identified and the findings of the current study. All the items were highly rated on the ideal scale in the current study. A difference was that in the current study communication was divided differently. In addition, a number of items were investigated separately that de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber include as part of decision making *e.g.* problem solving. The preliminary work on the development of the questionnaire for the current study suggested that they were generally perceived as separate entities, despite the conceptual inclusion suggested by de la Harpe, Radloff & Wyber. However, this difference in approach does not, alter the general close similarity between findings of the two studies.

c) Hesketh, 2000

Hesketh (2000) focussed on employers' perceptions of graduates' abilities. In many ways his research had similarities with the study reported here. Many of the items used were identical to those used in the current study. His two scales for "*importance*" and "*satisfaction*" approximately corresponded with the ideal and actual scales used in the current study, albeit using a three-point scale. However, the use of "actual" rather than "*satisfaction*" in the current study gave a different slant to these responses. The current study attempted to ascertain the perception of the importance given to the particular items identified. Hesketh was concerned with how satisfied employers were with the level achieved.

The overall results reported by Hesketh showed a marked similarity with the current study. Virtually all aspects were rated as more important than appeared to be being

achieved. Information technology was the only exception, showing a marginal discrepancy the other way. With the exception of word processing, the computer related items in the current study all showed a large standardised difference (> 0.8) between the ideal and the actual.

Hesketh found that the greatest discrepancies were in self-management, teamwork and written and verbal communication. This broadly mirrored the results from the current research, although the greater level of detail in the current study meant that other items also had large discrepancies.

Hesketh claimed that his figures demonstrate that technical skills are not now considered important by employers. However, this seems to be an assumption not supported by the figures he provided. It is certainly contradicted by the current study which although indicating the importance of generic skills, also indicated that technical skills were highly valued by employers.

A further major discrepancy with the current study, was that Hesketh claimed that employers were generally satisfied with the skill levels of graduates. This is directly contradicted by the current research. As mentioned above, the factors related to employment (vocational preparation and employment related), indicated the greatest discrepancies between the ideal and actual scales for the employers. A possible explanation for this contradiction, is that there are features of hospitality management that are different from other industries, even apparently similar ones. Another factor may have been in the sample used. As a consequence of the sampling method Hesketh used, the respondents were likely to have been from large companies recruiting large numbers of graduates onto graduate training schemes. The respondents would therefore probably not be directly involved in supervising newly recruited graduates.

In a comparison of his findings with the Dearing (1997) report, he suggested that some items emphasised as important by Dearing, were considered less so by his respondents. In particular, he claims that numeracy and information technology skills, not seen as a problem by his sample, were claimed by Dearing to be inadequate. The current study agreed with Dearing with regard to numeracy, with a standardised difference between ideal and actual of 1.44; and aspects of information technology, with standardised differences ranging from 0.81 to 1.17 between the ideal and actual scales. Conversely, problem-solving, teamwork and self-management that had been rated as very important by Hesketh's respondents, were not mentioned by Dearing. In this case, the current study agreed with Hesketh, with high ideal means for these items (> 4.25).

d) Nicholson & Cushman, 2000

This study was concerned with retailing graduates who might be expected to show some similarities with hospitality management graduates, in view of the customer service focus of both industries.

Following a complicated analysis designed to show *"co-orientation"*, Nicholson & Cushman's conclusion was that employers are looking for strong competence in the affective domain, whereas academics value cognitive and interpersonal skills more highly. In the current study, although there were a number of items where the group response for the academics was significantly different from that for the employers, there were no general groups of attributes that were more highly rated on the ideal scales. There was also considerable agreement on many items. Furthermore, virtually all skill related items were rated as important by both groups. However, as only a limited number of cognitive skills had been identified and used in the questionnaire design, the contrast may not have become apparent in the current study. The groups

were not asked for their expectation of the other groups' responses so this area of possible difference was not assessed.

e) Donald & Denison, 2001

The research cannot be directly compared with the current study in view of the items selected, and the wide variety of courses represented by the respondents. However, some similarities with the current research were evident. The principal components analysis suggested that a number of components contributed to the notion of quality. Although fewer components were identified by Donald & Denison than in the current study, they used only 25 items in their questionnaire, compared to the 90 in the current study, and these were restricted to general items.

In addition the general correspondence of students' views with that of the other stakeholders was also seen in the current research.

f) Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2001

This report produced by CHME on behalf of HEFCE canvassed hospitality industry employers' views. The large majority of the firms appear to have been large or very large, and the personnel interviewed were employed at a senior level. Some other input was claimed, but it was not clear how this was integrated. It is possible that differences noted with the current study could have been, at least in part, due to this different approach to data collection.

The main obvious contrast, is that the HEFCE report states that there was no evidence to suggest a mismatch between what education is providing, and what the employers are seeking. This was clearly contradicted by the current study which indicated a general feeling, that education is not meeting the aspirations of the employers.

The HEFCE report suggested that technical skills were less important than more general business skills. However, it also suggested that graduates needed to be able to cope with the *"technical operational complexity of hospitality operations"*.

The current study supported an alternative emphasis in that practical skills were rated very highly. Other areas that were identified as being important in the HEFCE report were also rated highly in the current study. These included people skills, problem solving and transferable (generic) skills. The HEFCE report claimed that commercial skills were also important, but it was not entirely clear what is included in this category. It is discussed in the context of distinguishing academic and practical business subjects, and implied that theoretical aspects were less important than practical ones. The current research also indicated that applied skills were necessary but that employers also rated the inclusion of management theory as important:

35h) The theoretical parts of the course include: management (employer ideal mean of 4.50)

Applying management principles and knowledge was also given high ratings:

9. demonstrate the understanding and ability to apply general management principles in appropriate situations (combined ideal mean of 4.36)

The HEFCE report noted concern about over emphasis on particular sectors, specifically the hotel sector. However, this does not seem to be supported by the current study. Examining the combined means shows the actual score (3.78) for the knowledge of the hotel sector was below the high ideal score for this item (4.40). This was similar for each stakeholder group. There were variations between the importance given to knowledge of particular sectors as is shown in table 32.

Table 32: Ideal means of items concerned with sectors of the hospitality industry

Item number and summary	combined ideal	academics ideal	employers ideal	alumni ideal	students ideal
20 knowledge of a number of sectors	4.35	4.46	3.86	4.52	4.47
20a) hotel sector	4.40	4.45	4.16	4.31	4.48
20b) restaurant sector	4.30	4.29	4.23	4.48	4.30
20c) travel agency sector	3.38	3.32	3.06	3.25	3.58
20d) fast food sector	3.49	3.90	3.04	3.21	3.38
20e) conference sector	3.96	4.04	4.10	3.86	3.84
20f) special event sector	3.93	4.02	3.87	4,04	3.86
21 has studied depth at least one sector	4.39	4.33	4.19	4.69	4.48

In summary, with the possible exception of technical skills, the HEFCE report had similar conclusions to the current study. However, it appears from the current study that the HEFCE report was too positive about the extent to which the identified aspects are being delivered. It was claimed that there was no evidence that education was failing to meet the requirements of employers. This may have been a consequence of the technique used for gathering data (by interview), and that the sample surveyed were senior staff.

g) Warn & Tranter, 2001

This study was based on a degree for intending officers in the Australian military. It looked at *"generic competencies"* and the extent to which they correlated with the graduates' perceptions of the degree quality and the extent to which it prepared them for the intended career route.

It was implied by the authors that the study used a list that represented the totality of competences of any importance for the graduates. The study was very limited in scope, looking at only two criteria: a) the quality of a degree courses compared to others; and b) the fitness for the purpose of preparing the graduates for being military officers. The responses on those two items were then linked to the self-evaluation of competence. As no vocationally specific items were included, it was not possible to compare this

aspect with the current research. In general, Warn & Tranter found that there was little correlation of the competences with the two criteria.

An important finding by Warn & Tranter was that competence development was not perceived as a part of the quality of a degree. This seems in marked contrast to the findings in the current study as these suggested that acquiring various skills were seen as important for the quality of the course. This finding applied to both the generic and the vocationally specific areas. This contrast may have resulted for the very different nature of the courses in the two studies. However, they were both strongly vocational, albeit for different vocations.

11.2.4 Summary of comparison with other sources

The current research corresponded with the other sources in most respects. This was particularly marked with regard to the complexity of the notion of quality in higher education. A key discrepancy was with regard to the importance of specific operational skills. These seemed to be more important to the respondents than is generally acknowledged in the literature.

The recent studies suggested a generally coherent view, although with a number of differences in emphasis. They reinforced the view of the complexity of the concept of quality. They also implied a strong subjective element to any evaluation of quality. This correlates with the theoretical perspectives discussed in section 2.2.2. This was linked with the concept of fitness for purpose, and therefore with the various views of the purpose of higher education discussed in section 2.2.3.

In general, although there were significant similarities between the current research and aspects of the other studies reported here, there were also a number of key differences. These differences also exist between aspects of the other studies. The

similarities suggest that there is an issue of whether higher education is meeting the needs of its stakeholders, particularly with regard to employment. The differences could be explained by the varying methodologies used, and because of differences between various industries, a possibility hinted at in Hesketh's (2000) study. This could suggest a limitation on the notion of transferable skills, if significant differences apply within different employment contexts.

11.3 Distinctive and original features of the current study

The research reported here investigated an area of considerable importance to the design and delivery of hospitality management courses.

A few studies have considered aspects of vocational higher education for other disciplines. Very few have examined aspects of hospitality management. The literature search did not reveal any study that collected data that allowed comparison of the stakeholder groups in the manner of the current research. The study compared responses from four stakeholder groups. Other studies have examined one group or at most compared two. Consequently, the current study better reflects the complexity and variety of stakeholder opinion.

The research instrument was much broader in scope than other studies encompassing all aspects that were identified during the questionnaire development phase. Other studies have concentrated on fewer aspects, usually the generic ones applicable across a range of employment sectors.

The current research was designed to allow comparison of the stakeholder views of two aspects of each item. The two scales represented respondents' views of both:

a) the ideal importance of the item as a contributor to quality;

b) the perception of what importance the item was actually given.

Thus there was a comparison of the key stakeholder groups and their views, on the distinction between the quality aspired to, and the quality perceived to be achieved, in hospitality management courses. This made the study unusual, if not unique. Consequently, the study makes a significant contribution to the knowledge currently available in this area.

There are limitations as to the study's wider applicability, as discussed in section 11.6. However the findings will be of value to the designers and deliverers of undergraduate hospitality management programmes. Publication of both the theoretical discussions concerning the issues surrounding quality in vocational higher education, and the more specific findings concerning hospitality management will be of interest to professionals in this field.

11.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the current research

In general the methodology adopted appeared to be appropriate and to yield suitable data to illuminate the topic under investigation. The large number and range of secondary data sources that were included in the literature review allowed confidence that key concepts had been addressed.

The small number of interviews and only one focus group could be seen as a limitation. However, the consistency of the data and the links with the published material from the literature review, suggested that this procedure was adequate for the purpose of devising the questionnaire.

The length of the questionnaire, and the demands this placed on the respondents, was of concern. It is probable that this reduced the response rate. Nevertheless, the substantial number of respondents that did complete it appeared to do so consistently. The analysis of the data suggested that it might be possible to produce a refined

research instrument of shorter length. For the research reported here, it is unlikely that a shorter questionnaire would have yielded the level of detail required. Even given the length of the questionnaire, it was not possible in this single study to explore all aspects in depth.

The use of a questionnaire was appropriate. It allowed views to be taken from a relatively large number of people, and to compare responses from different stakeholder groups. Interviews would have yielded more in depth information concerning how the concept of quality was perceived by the participants. However, the range of opinion would have necessarily been very small. It would have been more difficult to make comparisons with other studies.

The usefulness of the dual Likert scale procedure meant that a similar scale could be used if the study were to be repeated. The statistical and factor analyses used relied on some assumptions about the data, such as linearity of the scales. However, consulted methodology sources (*e.g.* Oppenheim, 1992), suggested that these assumptions were reasonable and widely adopted. All other studies used for comparison adopted a similar assumption. The analyses were inherently conservative in nature. This meant that it was reasonable to presume that differences existed, where they were shown to be statistically significant.

Although it was not unexpected, the skewed nature of the data was of some concern. Theoretically, many of the statistical tests used were reliable only for parametric data. However, where non-parametric tests could be used alongside the parametric tests, the results were virtually identical. Consequently, the advantages of using the parametric tests outweighed the theoretical error in doing so. The nature of the data being collected probably ensured that, at least for the ideal scales, a skewed distribution was

inevitable. Again, given the nature of the research, this approach could be used in any repetition.

Sampling was an area of weakness. There was the ever-present difficulty of self-completion questionnaires, that only those respondents who could be bothered to complete the lengthy questionnaire could be part of the sample. As such, in common with most surveys, there was at least an element of non-randomness (Bryman & Cramer, 2001). A higher response rate would have been desirable, but the data met the requirements for factor analysis (Field, 2000).

The various sources used for the academics' sample ensured that respondents from an adequate number of different institutions were canvassed. Academic staff data were not available for all institutions. All academics for whom data were available were sampled. When collecting the data from websites it was not always clear with which subject area the member of academic staff was involved. It transpired during the data collection phase, that some entries in the Commonwealth Universities Yearbook (Association of Commonwealth Universities, 1998) seemed to be out of date. The website and the Year Book problems probably added to the non-response rate of this group.

The employers were sampled from a very large and diverse industry, with no possibility of using a sample that reflected this in a representative or comprehensive fashion. It is quite possible that there are major differences between various types of employer, in terms of the sectors of the industry, the size of the company and the position occupied in the company. The research was not able to distinguish between these aspects. Using employers that had a connection with Manchester Metropolitan University might have introduced a bias. However, most employers recruit graduates from a number of universities and so would have a range of experiences based on these

various universities. A contact name was available, as part of the database, in the large majority of cases. However, it transpired that the database was not always up to date. Some questionnaires were returned completed by the addressee, others were returned uncompleted as the contact person was no longer with the company. In some cases a person other than the addressee completed and returned the questionnaire when the addressee had moved.

The only alumni list that it was possible to use was the one from Manchester Metropolitan University. This was of graduates who had chosen to be included on the alumni list and so was not comprehensive. It is possible that addresses were not up to date which would have contributed to the limited response rate. It is likely that the list was biased towards those graduates that had a reasonably positive view of their programme of studies and the institution.

71.8% the student respondents were from one university (Manchester Metropolitan). Direct access to students from other universities proved impossible to arrange, possibly because of the potentially sensitive nature of the data being collected. Distribution through a third party was arranged for a number of universities but with a generally low response rate. Follow up of the non-responders was not possible as there was no direct contact. There was only a small window of opportunity, to gather data from students about to graduate that made alternative arrangements impossible to arrange. Insufficient students from other universities were included in the sample to allow for meaningful comparison.

11.5 Possible modifications if the study were to be repeated

Generally, the methodology for the study was satisfactory. It was felt that the questionnaire approach, with the dual scales, and comparing various stakeholders' responses was appropriate. However, during the progress of the study, various issues arose. With the wisdom of hindsight, these might have resulted in a different approach being taken. A number of these issues are discussed below.

1. The production of a questionnaire of reduced length.

The questionnaire that evolved from the preliminary work was a lengthy document. Completing this must have seemed a rather daunting prospect to some potential respondents. This was because it was designed to be comprehensive, and to elicit information about detailed aspects of hospitality management courses. The results of the factor analysis suggested that it might be possible to produce a shorter questionnaire, that encapsulated the key aspects of the quality of the courses.

The items suggested by the component loadings are noted in section 11.1. Using these items would result in a questionnaire of just under half the length of the one used in the study. Further research would be needed to establish the validity and reliability of such a questionnaire.

2. A narrower focus for the research.

From the results obtained, and a review of other studies, it seems that the issue of skills acquisition is of paramount importance in vocational higher education. This seems a major quality issue, not least because of its connection with the fitness for purpose debate. In a repeated study it might have been possible to concentrate the questionnaire

items on this aspect. Generic and hospitality specific items could be included. A side effect of this would have been to shorten the questionnaire considerably.

3. Modification of the respondent sample.

There were some aspects of the sampling of the various stakeholder groups that could be improved.

A clearer identification of relevant staff would be preferable to try and avoid the erroneous data problem noted in section 11.4. This might be achieved by using websites as the source and by asking staff to return the questionnaire with an indication of their involvement with hospitality management courses.

A possible method of extending the alumni and student samples would be to involve colleagues from other institutions to participate as collaborators with the research. This would facilitate access to students and alumni from these other institutions. This would probably have been assisted by a shorter questionnaire.

In view of the limited number of alumni a possibility would be to drop them from the study. Using files of recent graduates might have been a possibility at the time of the current study, but may now not be possible in view of data protection rules.

4. Response rates.

Improvement of the response rates would have been desirable. Reducing the length of the questionnaire may have had a positive affect on response rates. In addition to such a reduction, another follow-up of non-responders might be possible. At the time of the current study, the low extra response following the first follow-up suggested that the time and expense of a further follow-up would not be justified. Closer monitoring of the student sample would have been necessary for this to be achieved for these

stakeholders, to enable individual non-responders to be identified. Confirmation of the correct contact name for employers might effect an improvement in the response from this group.

Section 11.7 examines some of those aspects discussed in 11.5 which could be further investigated

11.6 Applicability beyond the study

From the comments regarding the limitations of the range and number of respondents, it follows that great caution is needed in extending the findings of the study more widely. The study was a snapshot of the views of the sample available. More research would be needed to support any claim for wider applicability.

Some of the findings support, and are supported by other studies, *e.g.* the importance of various generic skills. Other findings seem to suggest an emphasis that has not been so widely supported, *e.g.* the importance of specific vocational skills. In part the latter may be as a result of the limited research done in this area with hospitality management as its focus. Although these vocational skills were not rated as highly as some generic skills, the means shown in table 33 suggest that they are considered of importance especially by employers and alumni.

Table 33: Operational skills: ideal scales

Item number and summary	combined ideal	academics ideal	employers ideal	alumni ideal	students ideal
19 competent in operational skills	4.33	4.35	4.32	4.34	4.30
19a) competent in reception skills	4.00	3.95	4.12	3.96	3.98
19b) competent in kitchen skills	3.85	3.74	3.95	4.00	3.85
19c) competent in restaurant skills	3.98	3.86	4.14	4.11	3.98

The values from the actual scales shown in table 34 suggest that courses are not delivering sufficiently highly in these areas.

Table 34: Operational skills: actual scales

Item number and summary	combined actual	academics actual	employers actual	alumni actual	students actual
19 competent in operational skills	3.36	3.41	3.20	3.66	3.33
19a) competent in reception skills	2.81	3.11	2.95	2.59	3.98
19b) competent in kitchen skills	2.97	2.95	2.79	3.54	2.95
19c) competent in restaurant skills	3.27	3.17	3.39	3.82	3.16

The current study raises the possibility that hospitality management graduate employment has vocational skills requirements that are different from many other industries. This finding would seem to be supported by the requirements of the HCIMA's *"Corpus of management excellence"* (2001), and of the Unit 25 subject benchmarks (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2000a). Compared to most other industries, hospitality management is highly fragmented. There are a large number of relatively small units. These units, even when part of a large company, operate on an autonomous or semi-autonomous basis, at least from a tactical, day-to-day running perspective. Often most, if not all, of the staff have direct contact with the customers and are required to be operationally proficient. This could be expected to place more emphasis on all employees being in a position to carry out technical functions.

The positive responses to those elements concerning specific skills, does suggest that there is a *prima facie* case, for specific vocational skills being an important aspect of a high quality hospitality management courses. Certainly, if the purpose is first destination employment, then the fitness for purpose argument might be important.

11.7 Suggestions for further research

During the course of the research, a number of possible areas for further research were identified. These are summarised below.

1. The whole question of skills is central to vocational education. The extent to which they should be acquired and required is an important area of debate. The types of skills are usually classified into generic and vocationally specific. There is a general assumption that generic skills can be transferred between employment areas. Although it has been challenged from a philosophical point of view (*e.g.* Billett, 2001), it appears to be largely untested, and fruitful research could be done on this. The extent of transferability could have a strong bearing on the nature of vocational courses.

2. The issue of the importance of specific vocational skills merits further work. The apparent discrepancy, noted in the section 11.6, between hospitality management and many other industries warrants further investigation. This could have a critical bearing on hospitality management courses.

3. The factor analysis in the current study suggested that it might be possible to produce a reasonably concise instrument to measure the quality of hospitality management courses. It would need considerable research, development and testing to establish the feasibility of this.

4. A considerable number of students take strongly vocationally orientated courses such as hospitality management, but then choose not to pursue a career in that vocational area. Research on their reasons for choosing the courses in the first place and/or not pursuing this career route would be helpful to universities in both the marketing and course planning areas.

5. A number of the most highly rated items (≥ 4.50) on the ideal scales concerned areas of graduate ability where student assessment is problematic. Table 35 shows the items in this category.

Table 35 Items with high combined means (≥ 4.50) on the ideal scale, where assessment is problematic

Item number and summary	combined	academics	employers	alumni	students
6 interact with other people	4.61	4.76	4.62	4.69	4.46
12 work effectively as a team member	4.64	4.68	4.66	4.86	4.55
24 equipped to gain hospitality industry employment	4.65	4.87	4.44	4.76	4.52

In view of their apparent importance, devising methods for student assessment for these areas would provide all stakeholders with valuable information. Research would be needed to determine if there are direct, or meta, measures that could be used to generate valid, fair and not too complex methods of assessment.

11.8 Conclusions

This section summarises the main conclusions drawn from the study and relates them to other higher education courses.

The limitations of any study of this sort mean that conclusions can only be tentative and limited. Any extrapolation beyond the study must be made with caution. However, a comparison of the findings of the current study with other published material does suggest considerable similarity.

11.8.1 The notion of quality

The notion of quality in higher education is a complex one. Thus the deriving of some specific definition of quality is very difficult, if not impossible, and is probably futile.

Quality has a number of aspects that are linked to the fitness for, and of, purpose discussions that permeate debates of this kind. Therefore, the perspective of whoever is determining the quality may be of key importance in any quality evaluation. The issue of what is being determined as quality, then comes to the criteria to be used in its determination. These are inextricably linked with the definition used, and will similarly vary with the perspective of the interest group involved (and with each individual).

The current research confirmed the complexity of the notion with regard to hospitality management higher education. However, in addition, it suggested that despite significant variation in emphasis between different stakeholders, there was also a broad measure of agreement; the differences being largely a matter of degree. It may be that although conceptual and perceptual differences are found, when it comes to a specific case, considerable agreement can be achieved.

11.8.2 Quality evaluation

It appears, from the literature, that conducting a quality evaluation is fraught with difficulties. It is probably not possible to identify criteria that will determine all aspects of quality. Arguably some of the most important aspects will elude specification in a measurable way. However, it is also clear that making no attempt to evaluate quality is equally unsatisfactory. So although we can recognise significant problems with any chosen set of criteria, the current politico-economic reality is that accountability is demanded. Much of the criticism is concerned with the particular method of evaluation, and especially what is done with the outcomes of the evaluation by various agencies. It seems inescapable, and is probably entirely justifiable, that higher education will be subject to quality assessment of some sort, in view of the amount of public money invested in it. Consequently, there seems little prospect that institutions will escape

periodic reviews of their performance, and many would argue that this is quite rightly the case. Governments not only wants to ensure the best use of the money spent, but also wants to demonstrate how carefully its use is monitored.

A climate has been created where potential students expect to have a rating available to inform their choice. Whether this rating really does reflect important qualitative differences is only discussed within the sphere of activity concerned. Criticism of it is usually seen as either "sour grapes" from, or "special pleading" for, the interests group making the criticism. This is perhaps especially true of higher education where the traditional route, and the only real alternative, is to adopt a variant of the "trust us, we are the professionals" approach. Although this is probably preferred within institutions it is virtually unassessable from the outside.

11.8.3 Comparison of courses

For objective comparison of courses what is necessary is the development of criteria, and ways of applying them, that can provide meaningful quality judgements without causing distortion. It may be possible to determine various factors and indicators, that can be used to evaluate quality, at least relative to others of the same kind. It is necessary to ensure that the biggest difficulties are reduced, and that we get as near as possible to satisfying the requirements of the various stakeholders. The fundamental issue is whether what is being examined meets the purposes dictated by the values of the observer(s). Consequently, it is the issue of differing value systems, and how well they can be accommodated, that determines the validity of any quality assessment.

In summary, the need is for the most appropriate criteria to be applied, given the purpose of the assessment. The criteria should be fit for the purpose, and the purpose

itself should be appropriate. However, given the varying perspectives of the stakeholders, compromises are likely to be needed.

The research reported here suggests, based on the responses to the ideal scales, that there are commonalities that can be identified. These can then be utilised to inform the judgement of the quality of a higher education hospitality management course.

They would include (from section 9.3.1):

Generic skills, particularly those concerned with people interaction and problem solving.

An extended period of work experience.

Student support

Some specific theoretical aspects, particularly:

management
human resource management
marketing

but also:

hygiene
financial accounting

Student support

Specific hospitality operational skills. It is this aspect that contrasts with other research which has indicated that skills specific to the vocational area of the course are not considered important.

11.8.4 Hospitality management compared to other vocational higher education

The research confirms the view that skills are important element in hospitality management courses. The scale responses and the factor analysis suggested that competence in a variety of skills is crucial to the development of a graduate in

hospitality management. With regard to generic skills this is equally applicable to other types of vocational higher education.

A feature that seems to emerge in comparison with other studies, is that hospitality management and the skill requirements of its graduates may have a different emphasis to many or most other industries. The difference appears to be in the extent of operational skills the graduate is required to develop.

Why this should be such a desirable attribute of hospitality management graduates, and apparently less for other graduates, is not clear. It may be connected to the fragmentation of the hospitality industry into of autonomous units mentioned in section 11.6. The nature of the business ensures that customer contact is common and frequent, requiring appropriate responses from all staff. A further factor may be that expectations of operational skill are raised by the large proportion of supervisors and managers who have progressed up the company from operational roles. The proportion of graduates in managerial positions in hospitality management is much lower than in other industries. This raises an expectation that managers can perform operationally, because most of them can, having reached their position via the operational competence route.

From the current research it appears that the inclusion of an extended period of work experience is essential and is at least partially linked to the issue of skills development. The majority of respondents thought that 12 months was an appropriate time for this. This sort of duration fits well within an academic context so is probably the optimum.

This may also be a feature of other vocational higher education courses. Many professional and statutory bodies require relevant work experience, and it was endorsed by the Dearing report (Dearing, 1997)

11.8.5 Course content and organisation

As noted in section 11.8.3, the range of subjects that should be included in a hospitality management course is considerable, most of the subjects identified in the questionnaire were considered important. Nutrition and foreign languages were less highly regarded than other subjects. The studying of some of the variety of sectors of the hospitality industry was highly regarded. With respect to processes, assessments should be varied with written assignments and reports being the most important. These correspond most closely to the employment requirements. However, this is an area giving concern, with regard to the difficulty of ensuring that the work submitted has been completed unaided by the student concerned. This was also considered important.

Overall, the emphasis suggested by the responses was that those items particularly related to employment, especially employment in the hospitality industry, were the items that were considered the main contributors to quality. Although there were variations between the groups, this did not alter the main thrust of the responses in this respect. All items were perceived to be being delivered at a level well below what would be considered ideal. Reviewing which of the most highly rated items were being least achieved (section 9.3.3), indicated a large perceived shortfall in a number of the skills areas, both generic and specific; and in management theory and student support

11.8.6 A comparison of the research findings with the research question

A consideration of the research findings in relation to the original research question and hypotheses, suggests that the hypotheses were supported by the results.

Items were identified which stakeholders considered as important for the quality of a hospitality management higher education course. Courses without these elements would not be considered of good quality by these stakeholders.

A considerable number and range of items were identified as important, but the secondary factor analysis confirmed that although items could be grouped into a number of components, there was an underlying conceptual link between the components.

The primary factor analysis together with the mean values could be used to determine a check list of items which could serve as a means of establishing the quality of a hospitality management higher education course. However, this would need to contain a large number of elements.

Another aspect of the research question was concerning the difference between the responses on the two scales. A difference was anticipated, but the scale of the difference and the fact that it was significantly different for all items for the combined means was more pronounced than expected. This confirmed that courses in hospitality management higher education fail to achieve the aspirations of the stakeholders.

A further aspect of the research question was that of variations between various stakeholder groups as to their opinion of the importance of items contributing to the quality of the courses. The hypothesis was that differences would be found between the groups. The hypothesis was confirmed as significant differences were found in the majority of items. In particular, the academics and employers differed in the emphasis on number of ideal items, but more especially in their perception of what was being achieved. This confirmed that the academic-industry divide noted in the literature

applied. This divide is related to the purpose issue discussed in section 2.2 with the employers having a more limited purpose. This suggests that the tensions in the vocational-academic divide are an inevitable consequence of the differing perspectives of the stakeholders.

11.8.7 Summary

A major challenge to vocational courses is to how to deliver the various aspects in a way that is perceived to have a more positive affect on the graduates. In the current research, most if not all the items rated highly are included in some form in most hospitality courses. The much lower rating of the perception of to what extent they are being achieved is a matter of concern to all stakeholders. This may be a partly inevitable consequence of human nature, of reality never quite matching aspirations. However, more attention to delivering skills would seem to be highly desirable, indeed it could be considered as the key aspect of a quality improvement strategy. In this respect at least, hospitality management higher education appears to be little different from other higher education.

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Appendix I: Copy of the questionnaire used for the main study

his questionnaire is concerned with the quality of courses in hospitality management.

ach item is accompanied by two scales. The scales have five points ranging from 1: not at all nportant, to 5: very important i.e.:

not at all important 1 2 3 4 5 very important

n the first scale please indicate your opinion of the importance that should ideally be attached to e items when assessing the quality of a degree course in hospitality management. On the second haded) scale indicate your perception of the actual importance that is given to the items on the ɔurse that you are studying :

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ease circle the number that is closest to your opinion. If you have no opinion or experience with gard to a particular item, please tick the relevant box.

<u>Items 1 to 17 are prefaced by: "Graduates are able to ..."</u>

ıse clearly and accurately, in a form suitable for the target audience:

a) written English

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) spoken English

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

lentify and utilise appropriate information to make decisions

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ıanipulate and interpret financial data, at least to the level of preparing a simple balance sheet

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

:termine solutions to problems

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

make appropriate use of computers and their software for:

a) word processing

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) spreadsheets

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) data bases

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

d) booking systems

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

e) information retrieval

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

f) other(s), please specify

nteract with other people as appropriate to the situation

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ommunicate in a major language other than English

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

perate as a junior manager

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

1 2 3 4 5
--------->increasing importance

, demonstrate the understanding and ability to apply general management principles in appropriate tuations

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

) act independently in a way appropriate to the situation

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

. set personal targets and regularly review progress towards meeting them

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

. work effectively as a member of a team

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of facts, concepts, principles and theories relating to naging in the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

interpret the significance of data/information in:

a) numerical form

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) verbal/non-numerical form

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

retrieve information from a variety of sources and in a variety of formats

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

5. **plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working**

a) personally

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) for others

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

'. achieve an adequate level of numeracy

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

Items 18 to 26 are prefaced by "Graduates ..."

. have acquired an appreciation of appropriate professional ethics associated with the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

. become competent in operational skills utilised in the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

in specific areas:

a) reception

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) kitchen production

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) restaurant service

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

e) other - please specify

1 2 3 4 5
--------->increasing importance

). have knowledge of a number of sectors of the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

Please comment on the importance of knowledge of particular sectors:

a) hotel

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) restaurant

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) travel agency

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

d) fast food

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

e) conference

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

f) special event

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

g) other(s) - please specify

ıave studied in depth at least one sector of the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

2. are seen to achieve an academic standard comparable to graduates in other disciplines

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

3. have the knowledge and concepts that will be required at higher management levels, i.e. beyond first or econd employment destination

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

4. are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

5. have the necessary qualities to apply for jobs outside the hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

6. have developed the skills needed for continuing development

a) personal

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) professional

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ms 27 to 30 are prefaced with "Assessments..."

cover the full range of specified learning outcomes

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

are in proportion to the learning time devoted to the topic being assessed.

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ensure that all students reach a minimum standard in all assessed areas

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

1 2 3 4 5

-------->increasing importance

) are conducted in a variety of formats.

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

l. Please comment on the importance of particular assessment formats:

a) examinations

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

b) open book examinations

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

c) seminar papers

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

d) written assignments

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

e) reports

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

f) practical tests

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

g) dissertation

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

h) oral presentations

ideal	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion
actual	1	2	3	4	5	☐ no opinion

i) other(s) please specify

2. Some assessments are integrated across various subject areas

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

3. All assessments count towards the final marks/classification

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

4. It is ensured that most assessments could only have been completed by the individual student.

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

5 The <u>theoretical</u> parts of the course include:

a) marketing

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) foreign language(s)

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) financial accounting

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

d) hygiene

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

e) nutrition

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

f) human resource management

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

1 2 3 4 5
--------->**increasing importance**

g) law

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

h) management

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

i) research methods

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

j) other(s) - please specify

<u>Questions 36 to 38 are prefaced by: "Students..."</u>

are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

undertake an extended period of work experience

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

Please indicate your opinion of the optimal duration of this work experience:

1 month
3 months
6 months
12 months
other (please specify)

are able to influence their course in respect of the:

a) content (what is taught)

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) process (how it is taught)

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) method of assessment

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

). experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

a) as part of the academic curriculum

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) during work experience

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

this practical experience should be in the following areas:

i) reception

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ii) kitchen

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

iii) restaurant

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

iv) other(s) please specify

1 2 3 4 5
--------->increasing importance

). The main focus of the course is:

a) personal development

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) general attributes suitable for any employment

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) attributes particularly suitable for hospitality industry

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

Employers have a significant effect on course content

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

. Students experience the following teaching/learning strategies

a) computer assisted learning

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

b) lectures

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

c) seminars

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

d) tutorials

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

f) group activities

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

g) dissertation

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

h) student presentations

ideal 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

actual 1 2 3 4 5 ☐ no opinion

you have any suggestions of items not included above that you feel are important, or any other comments, please te them below.

ınk you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Appendix II: List of questionnaire items

In order to facilitate reference to specific questionnaire items, the items are provided in abbreviated list form in this appendix.

Items 1 to 17 were prefaced by: "Graduates are able to ..."

1. use clearly and accurately, in a form suitable for the target audience:
    a) written English
    b) spoken English
2. identify and utilise appropriate information to make decisions
3. manipulate and interpret financial data, at least to the level of preparing a simple balance sheet
4. determine solutions to problems
5. make appropriate use of computers and their software for:
    a) word processing
    b) spreadsheets
    c) data bases
    d) booking systems
    e) information retrieval
6. interact with other people as appropriate to the situation
7. communicate in a major language other than English
8. operate as a junior manager
9. demonstrate the understanding and ability to apply general management principles in appropriate situations
10 act independently in a way appropriate to the situation
11. set personal targets and regularly review progress towards meeting them
12. work effectively as a member of a team
13. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of facts, concepts, principles and theories relating to managing in the hospitality industry
14. interpret the significance of data/information in:
    a) numerical form
    b) verbal/non-numerical form
15. retrieve information from a variety of sources and in a variety of formats
16. plan and implement efficient and effective modes of working
    a) personally
    b) for others
17. achieve an adequate level of numeracy

Items 18 to 26 were prefaced by "Graduates ..."

18. have acquired an appreciation of appropriate professional ethics associated with the hospitality industry
19. become competent in operational skills utilised in the hospitality industry

in specific areas:

a) reception
b) kitchen production

c) restaurant service

20. have knowledge of a number of sectors of the hospitality industry

particular sectors:

a) hotel
b) restaurant
c) travel agency
d) fast food
e) conference
f) special event

21. have studied in depth at least one sector of the hospitality industry
22. are seen to achieve an academic standard comparable to graduates in other disciplines
23. have the knowledge and concepts that will be required at higher management levels, i.e. beyond first or second employment destination
24. are equipped to gain suitable employment in the hospitality industry
25. have the necessary qualities to apply for jobs outside the hospitality industry
26. have developed the skills needed for continuing development

a) personal
b) professional

Items 27 to 30 were prefaced with "Assessments..."

27. cover the full range of specified learning outcomes
28. are in proportion to the learning time devoted to the topic being assessed.
29. ensure that all students reach a minimum standard in all assessed areas
30 are conducted in a variety of formats.
31. Please comment on the importance of particular assessment formats:

a) examinations
b) open book examinations
c) seminar papers
d) written assignments
e) reports
f) practical tests
g) dissertation
h) oral presentations

32. Some assessments are integrated across various subject areas
33. All assessments count towards the final marks/classification
34. It is ensured that most assessments could only have been completed by the individual student.
35 The theoretical parts of the course include:

a) marketing
b) foreign language(s)
c) financial accounting
d) hygiene
e) nutrition
f) human resource management
g) law
h) management
i) research methods

Questions 36 to 38 were prefaced by: "Students..."

36. are given extra support in areas in which they have difficulties
37. undertake an extended period of work experience

38. are able to influence their course in respect of the:
    a) content (what is taught)
    b) process (how it is taught)
    c) method of assessment
39. experience the skills of hospitality industry operations as part of their course
    a) as part of the academic curriculum
    b) during work experience
    this practical experience should be in the following areas:
        i) reception
        ii) kitchen
        iii) restaurant
40. The main focus of the course is:
    a) personal development
    b) general attributes suitable for any employment
    c) attributes particularly suitable for hospitality industry
41 Employers have a significant effect on course content
42. Students experience the following teaching/learning strategies
    a) computer assisted learning
    b) lectures
    c) seminars
    d) tutorials
    e) self-study materials
    f) group activities
    g) dissertation
    h) student presentations

Several questions had an open question where respondents could also supply a response that was not one of a predetermined list

Appendix III: Mean data for the stakeholder groups

Table 36: Academics' means

Item number and summary (questionnaire order)	ideal	SD	actual	SD	difference	standardised difference
1a) written English	4.67	.59	3.27	.76	1.40	2.08
1b) spoken English	4.59	.66	3.37	.81	1.22	1.66
2 use info for decisions	4.74	.46	3.47	.83	1.27	1.96
3 manipulate financial data	4.56	.65	3.40	1.03	1.16	1.38
4 solutions to problems	4.74	.50	3.50	.82	1.24	1.88
5 computers a) word processing	4.33	.73	3.97	.83	0.36	0.47
5 computers b) spreadsheets	4.22	.66	3.43	.90	0.79	1.00
5 computers c) databases	3.86	.84	2.96	1.05	0.90	0.94
5 computers d) booking systems	3.97	.90	3.09	1.05	0.88	0.88
5 computers e) information retrieval	4.39	.71	3.51	.83	0.88	1.14
6 interact with people	4.76	.49	3.69	.83	1.07	1.62
7 other language	3.85	.97	1.97	.96	1.88	1.92
8 operate as junior manager	4.18	.76	3.45	.84	0.73	0.97
9 apply general management	4.53	.62	3.38	.87	1.15	1.54
10 act independently	4.42	.71	3.35	.91	1.07	1.33
11 set personal targets	4.44	.73	3.04	1.00	1.40	1.63
12 work in a team	4.68	.58	3.88	.92	0.80	1.05
13 know management theory	4.60	.63	3.70	.93	0.90	1.16
14a) interpret numerical information	4.45	.71	3.00	.91	1.45	1.79
14b) interpret verbal information	4.53	.62	3.38	.79	1.15	1.63
15 retrieve information	4.45	.73	3.48	.94	0.97	1.17
16 plan working a) personally	4.44	.65	3.48	.85	0.96	1.48
16 plan working b) for others	4.22	.84	2.89	.90	1.33	1.53
17 adequate numeracy	4.50	.69	2.83	.78	1.67	2.29
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.31	.74	2.99	.91	1.32	1.60
19 competent in operational skills	4.35	.79	3.41	1.01	0.94	1.06
19a) reception skills	3.95	.97	3.11	1.04	0.84	0.84
19b) kitchen skills	3.74	1.00	2.95	1.11	0.79	0.75
19c) restaurant skills	3.86	.94	3.17	1.08	0.69	0.67
20 knows a number of sectors	4.46	.72	3.51	.96	0.95	1.14
20a) hotel sector	4.45	.73	3.93	.82	0.52	0.67
20b) restaurant sector	4.29	.83	3.65	.88	0.64	0.74
20c) travel agency sector	3.32	1.19	2.09	.92	1.23	1.17
20d) fast food sector	3.90	1.01	3.00	1.01	0.90	0.89
20e) conference sector	4.04	.85	2.88	.91	1.16	1.30
20f) special event sector	4.02	.90	2.77	.98	1.25	1.31
21 depth study of a sector	4.33	.90	3.62	1.13	0.71	0.70
22 comparable academics	4.74	.55	3.72	1.07	1.02	1.26
23 concepts for higher management	4.31	.82	3.43	.93	0.88	1.00
24 equipped for hospitality industry employment	4.87	.40	4.33	.84	0.54	0.87
25 equipped for outside hospitality industry	4.28	.83	3.77	.99	0.51	0.61
26a) skills for personal CPD	4.55	.58	3.62	.85	0.93	1.30
26b) skills for professional CPD	4.50	.62	3.58	.92	0.92	1.21
27 cover full range of outcomes	4.55	.72	4.04	.90	0.51	0.63
28 in proportion to learning time	4.49	.76	3.61	1.08	0.88	0.96
29 ensure a minimum in all	4.65	.58	3.96	.99	0.69	0.88
30 variety of formats	4.81	.48	4.17	.92	0.64	0.92

Table 36: Academics' means (*continued*)

31 assessment a) examination	3.82	1.13	3.52	1.19	0.30	0.26
31 assessment b) open book	3.38	1.16	2.83	1.19	0.55	0.54
31 assessment c) seminars	3.99	.79	3.28	1.11	0.71	0.78
31 assessment d) written assignments	4.50	.71	4.23	.79	0.27	0.39
31 assessment e) reports	4.47	.72	3.97	.85	0.50	0.66
31 assessment f) practical tests	4.13	.96	3.55	1.05	0.58	0.63
31 assessment g) dissertation	4.61	.73	4.29	.93	0.32	0.42
31 assessment h) oral presentations	4.60	.70	4.04	1.00	0.56	0.66
32 some integrated assessments	4.35	.79	3.01	1.12	1.34	1.40
33 all assessments count	3.62	1.32	3.24	1.26	0.38	0.29
34 ensure individual completion	4.41	1.06	2.93	1.03	1.48	1.48
35 theory a) marketing	4.67	.60	4.30	.86	0.37	0.61
35 theory b) foreign language	3.97	1.06	2.30	1.22	1.67	1.46
35 theory c) accounting	4.59	.68	3.79	1.18	0.80	0.86
35 theory d) hygiene	4.59	.72	4.19	1.03	0.40	0.47
35 theory e) nutrition	3.80	1.16	2.83	1.26	0.97	0.81
35 theory f) human resource management	4.73	.55	4.36	.82	0.37	0.55
35 theory g) law	4.14	.85	3.11	1.21	1.03	1.01
35 theory h) management	4.80	.46	4.18	.97	0.62	0.88
35 theory i) research methods	4.45	.80	3.60	1.13	0.85	0.89
36 given extra support	4.69	.57	3.79	1.14	0.90	1.45
37 undertake work experience	4.67	.79	4.48	.89	0.19	0.21
38 students influence a) content	3.61	1.11	2.89	1.10	0.72	0.66
38 students influence b) process	3.75	.95	2.91	1.08	0.84	0.82
38 students influence c) assessment method	3.26	1.19	2.66	1.10	0.60	0.53
39 experience hospitality industry skills	4.60	.64	4.06	1.01	0.54	0.65
39a) hospitality industry skills part of academics	4.25	.90	3.66	1.05	0.59	0.61
39b) hospitality industry skills during work experience	4.67	.68	4.31	.96	0.36	0.89
39b) experience in i) reception	4.11	.97	3.28	.99	0.83	0.62
39b) experience in ii) kitchen	4.01	.99	3.34	1.17	0.67	0.44
39b) experience in iii) restaurant	4.13	.95	3.70	.99	0.43	0.44
40 main focus a) personal	4.27	.70	3.62	.84	0.65	0.84
40 main focus b) general attributes	4.18	.75	3.67	.82	0.51	0.70
40 main focus c) hospitality industry attributes	4.49	.76	4.09	.94	0.40	0.47
41 employers affect course content	3.81	.94	2.76	1.18	1.05	0.99
42 teaching strategies a) CAL	4.25	.84	3.43	1.13	0.82	0.82
42 teaching strategies b) lectures	4.16	.97	4.23	.87	-0.07	0.09
42 teaching strategies c) seminars	4.57	.59	4.03	1.05	0.54	0.67
42 teaching strategies d) tutorials	4.64	.58	3.70	1.28	0.94	1.01
42 teaching strategies e) self study materials	4.23	.83	3.99	1.16	0.24	1.00
42 teaching strategies f) group activities	4.48	.74	4.21	.84	0.27	0.34
42 teaching strategies g) dissertation	4.62	.71	4.31	.95	0.31	0.35
42 teaching strategies h) students presentations	4.71	.57	4.31	.87	0.40	0.55

Table 37: Employers' means

Item number and summary (questionnaire order)	ideal	SD	actual	SD	difference	standardised difference
1a) written English	4.41	0.70	3.64	0.82	0.77	1.01
1b) spoken English	4.53	0.81	3.82	0.86	0.71	0.85
2 use info for decisions	4.54	0.71	3.25	0.75	1.29	1.76
3 manipulate financial data	3.84	1.02	2.85	1.00	0.99	0.97
4 solutions to problems	4.26	0.76	3.13	0.85	1.13	1.41
5 computers a) word processing	4.01	0.97	3.68	0.92	0.33	0.37
5 computers b) spreadsheets	3.91	0.93	3.23	0.90	0.68	0.72
5 computers c) databases	3.86	0.91	3.14	0.89	0.72	0.74
5 computers d) booking systems	3.95	0.96	2.97	0.83	0.98	1.08
5 computers e) information retrieval	3.90	0.98	3.26	0.90	0.64	0.67
6 interact with people	4.62	0.70	3.39	0.92	1.23	1.51
7 other language	3.18	1.05	2.12	0.88	1.06	1.18
8 operate as junior manager	3.87	0.91	2.84	1.01	1.03	1.09
9 apply general management	4.01	0.73	2.90	0.76	1.11	1.45
10 act independently	4.37	0.74	3.14	0.75	1.23	1.61
11 set personal targets	4.16	0.83	2.87	0.98	1.29	1.40
12 work in a team	4.66	0.66	3.72	1.01	0.94	1.12
13 know management theory	4.09	0.91	3.02	0.84	1.07	1.19
14a) interpret numerical information	4.04	0.85	3.11	0.94	0.93	1.05
14b) interpret verbal information	4.08	0.91	3.26	0.89	0.82	0.89
15 retrieve information	4.02	0.91	3.20	0.80	0.82	0.96
16 plan working a) personally	4.22	0.68	3.17	0.73	1.05	1.50
16 plan working b) for others	4.21	0.70	3.00	0.75	1.21	1.68
17 adequate numeracy	4.30	0.63	3.50	0.80	0.80	1.12
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.09	0.83	3.26	0.84	0.83	1.01
19 competent in operational skills	4.32	0.66	3.20	0.90	1.12	1.46
19a) reception skills	4.12	0.70	2.95	0.87	1.17	1.58
19b) kitchen skills	3.95	0.90	2.79	0.99	1.16	1.24
19c) restaurant skills	4.14	0.69	3.39	0.76	0.75	1.06
20 knows a number of sectors	3.86	0.97	3.15	0.84	0.71	0.76
20a) hotel sector	4.16	0.98	3.30	0.83	0.86	0.96
20b) restaurant sector	4.23	0.83	3.37	0.84	0.86	1.04
20c) travel agency sector	3.06	1.14	2.24	0.91	0.82	0.80
20d) fast food sector	3.04	1.15	2.44	0.83	0.60	0.52
20e) conference sector	4.10	0.90	2.89	1.01	1.21	1.26
20f) special event sector	3.87	0.91	2.87	0.99	1.00	1.09
21 depth study of a sector	4.19	0.95	3.53	0.85	0.66	0.80
22 comparable academic	4.02	0.95	3.15	0.83	0.87	1.00
23 concepts for higher management	3.88	0.86	2.91	0.79	0.97	1.09
24 equipped for HI employment	4.44	0.73	3.56	0.91	0.88	1.07
25 equipped for outside HI	3.80	1.02	2.02	0.96	1.78	0.82
26a) skills for personal CPD	4.30	0.68	3.30	0.70	1.00	1.49
26b) skills for professional CPD	4.28	0.72	3.17	0.89	1.11	1.41
27 cover full range of outcomes	3.95	0.90	3.00	0.78	0.95	1.03
28 in proportion to learning time	3.76	0.79	3.15	0.71	0.61	0.77
29 ensure a minimum in all	4.25	0.83	3.34	0.98	0.91	0.98
30 variety of formats	4.09	0.86	3.30	0.81	0.79	0.84
31 assessment a) examination	3.71	0.99	3.55	0.88	0.16	0.26
31 assessment b) open book	3.34	1.05	3.16	0.85	0.18	0.26
31 assessment c) seminars	3.55	1.03	3.37	0.87	0.18	0.22
31 assessment d) written assignments	3.98	1.00	3.67	0.99	0.31	0.31
31 assessment e) reports	4.23	0.92	3.65	0.93	0.58	0.56
31 assessment f) practical tests	4.41	0.78	3.72	0.83	0.69	0.76

Table 37: Employers' means (*continued)*

31 assessment g) dissertation	3.80	1.10	3.66	0.87	0.14	0.16
31 assessment h) oral presentations	4.35	0.76	3.50	0.84	0.85	1.06
32 some integrated assessments	3.93	0.77	3.26	0.91	0.67	0.80
33 all assessments count	4.20	0.88	3.56	0.82	0.64	0.63
34 ensure individual completion	4.31	1.01	3.30	1.02	1.01	0.95
35 theory a) marketing	4.28	0.91	3.28	0.77	1.00	1.18
35 theory b) foreign language	3.68	1.13	2.63	1.04	1.05	0.98
35 theory c) accounting	4.11	0.97	3.02	0.94	1.09	1.11
35 theory d) hygiene	4.55	0.80	3.70	1.10	0.85	0.85
35 theory e) nutrition	3.70	0.96	2.87	0.95	0.83	0.93
35 theory f) human resource management	4.40	0.81	3.06	0.94	1.34	1.47
35 theory g) law	3.99	0.99	3.14	1.02	0.85	0.84
35 theory h) management	4.50	0.85	3.34	0.98	1.16	1.22
35 theory i) research methods	3.60	1.06	3.13	0.91	0.47	0.57
36 given extra support	4.46	0.81	3.26	0.88	1.20	1.38
37 undertake work experience	4.52	0.80	3.88	0.85	0.64	0.78
38 students influence a) content	3.52	1.18	2.64	1.07	0.88	0.79
38 students influence b) process	3.62	1.02	2.91	0.87	0.71	0.82
38 students influence c) assessment method	3.55	1.09	2.87	0.92	0.68	0.78
39 experience HI skills	4.55	0.90	3.55	0.95	1.00	1.11
39a) HI skills part of academic	4.05	0.83	3.29	0.87	0.76	0.97
39b) HI skills during work experience	4.57	0.73	3.86	0.95	0.71	0.83
39b) experience in i) reception	4.31	0.74	3.40	0.98	0.91	1.23
39b) experience in ii) kitchen	3.98	0.97	3.28	1.08	0.70	0.67
39b) experience in iii) restaurant	4.26	0.81	3.81	0.90	0.45	0.62
40 main focus a) personal	4.02	0.85	3.31	0.81	0.71	0.77
40 main focus b) general attributes	3.97	0.95	3.17	0.89	0.80	0.87
40 main focus c) HI attributes	4.48	0.77	3.62	0.95	0.86	1.01
41 employers affect course content	3.94	0.82	2.71	1.00	1.23	1.47
42 teaching strategies a) CAL	4.24	0.87	3.50	0.94	0.74	0.93
42 teaching strategies b) lectures	3.97	0.91	3.79	0.78	0.18	0.25
42 teaching strategies c) seminars	3.95	0.96	3.60	0.85	0.35	0.41
42 teaching strategies d) tutorials	4.07	0.97	3.55	0.79	0.52	0.62
42 teaching strategies e) self study materials	3.93	0.89	3.26	0.88	0.67	0.73
42 teaching strategies f) group activities	4.26	0.97	3.38	0.84	0.88	0.94
42 teaching strategies g) dissertation	3.80	0.97	3.63	0.88	0.17	0.22
42 teaching strategies h) students presentations	4.37	0.92	3.36	0.92	1.01	1.09

Table 38: Alumni means

Item number and summary (questionnaire order)	mean ideal	SD	mean actual	SD	mean difference	standardised difference
1a) written English	4.69	0.55	3.57	0.84	1.12	1.60
1b) spoken English	4.66	0.62	3.57	0.92	1.12	1.39
2 use info for decisions	4.66	0.48	3.55	0.78	1.11	1.74
3 manipulate financial data	4.34	0.67	3.79	1.05	0.55	0.64
4 solutions to problems	4.55	0.51	3.79	0.86	0.76	1.11
5 computers a) word processing	4.24	0.74	3.69	1.17	0.55	0.58
5 computers b) spreadsheets	4.14	0.79	3.31	1.23	0.83	0.82
5 computers c) databases	3.72	1.16	2.66	1.14	1.06	0.93
5 computers d) booking systems	3.75	1.18	2.64	1.28	1.11	0.90
5 computers e) information retrieval	4.41	0.68	3.07	1.22	1.34	1.41
6 interact with people	4.69	0.55	3.61	0.88	1.08	1.50
7 other language	3.68	1.27	1.96	0.76	1.72	1.67
8 operate as junior manager	4.32	0.55	3.07	0.86	1.25	1.78
9 apply general management	4.59	0.57	3.55	0.99	1.04	1.33
10 act independently	4.32	0.68	3.44	0.64	0.88	1.35
11 set personal targets	4.25	0.84	3.04	1.04	1.21	1.29
12 work in a team	4.86	0.35	4.17	1.00	0.69	1.02
13 know management theory	4.14	0.88	3.48	1.15	0.66	0.65
14a) interpret numerical information	4.14	0.88	3.34	0.97	0.80	0.85
14b) interpret verbal information	4.18	0.55	3.50	0.84	0.68	0.98
15 retrieve information	4.21	0.73	3.48	1.18	0.73	0.75
16 plan working a) personally	4.21	0.77	3.41	1.05	0.80	0.86
16 plan working b) for others	4.18	0.67	3.29	1.01	0.89	1.06
17 adequate numeracy	4.55	0.57	3.69	0.93	0.86	1.15
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.10	0.86	3.24	0.91	0.86	0.97
19 competent in operational skills	4.34	0.94	3.66	0.97	0.68	0.72
19a) reception skills	3.96	1.08	2.59	1.07	1.37	1.29
19b) kitchen skills	4.00	0.77	3.54	1.11	0.46	0.49
19c) restaurant skills	4.11	0.96	3.82	0.98	0.29	0.30
20 knows a number of sectors	4.52	0.57	3.76	1.09	0.76	0.91
20a) hotel sector	4.31	0.97	3.79	0.90	0.52	0.56
20b) restaurant sector	4.48	0.69	3.90	0.94	0.58	0.73
20c) travel agency sector	3.25	1.14	1.82	0.98	1.43	1.35
20d) fast food sector	3.21	1.13	2.64	1.19	0.57	0.49
20e) conference sector	3.86	1.11	3.57	1.17	0.29	1.13
20f) special event sector	4.04	0.81	2.44	1.09	1.60	1.68
21 depth study of a sector	4.69	0.47	4.24	0.91	0.45	0.65
22 comparable academic	4.62	0.68	3.24	1.02	1.38	1.62
23 concepts for higher management	4.39	0.69	3.25	1.10	1.14	1.28
24 equipped for HI employment	4.76	0.51	4.03	0.98	0.73	0.97
25 equipped for outside HI	4.38	0.74	3.21	1.26	1.17	1.18
26a) skills opr personal CPD	4.48	0.57	3.59	1.18	0.89	1.03
26b) skills for professional CPD	4.41	0.63	3.34	1.14	1.07	1.21
27 cover full range of outcomes	4.26	0.66	3.52	0.94	0.74	0.93
28 in proportion to learning time	4.14	0.83	3.41	0.83	0.73	0.87
29 ensure a minimum in all	4.52	0.74	4.03	0.82	0.49	0.61
30 variety of formats	4.38	0.82	3.83	0.89	0.55	0.64
31 assessment a) examination	4.03	1.12	4.10	0.90	-0.07	-0.07
31 assessment b) open book	3.14	1.27	2.67	1.11	0.47	0.44
31 assessment c) seminars	3.88	1.13	3.00	1.00	0.88	0.83
31 assessment d) written assignments	4.41	0.78	4.17	0.89	0.24	0.29
31 assessment e) reports	4.68	0.55	4.18	0.86	0.50	0.71
31 assessment f) practical tests	4.57	0.63	4.04	0.96	0.53	0.68

Table 38: Alumni means *(continued)*

31 assessment g) dissertation	4.46	0.69	4.46	0.74	0.00	0.00
31 assessment h) oral presentations	4.55	0.69	3.72	1.07	0.83	0.95
32 some integrated assessments	4.29	0.66	3.32	1.09	0.97	1.10
33 all assessments count	3.96	1.29	3.41	1.12	0.55	0.47
34 ensure individual completion	4.24	0.95	2.93	1.13	1.31	1.26
35 theory a) marketing	4.52	0.69	3.86	0.92	0.66	0.82
35 theory b) foreign language	3.57	1.23	2.18	1.12	1.39	1.18
35 theory c) accounting	4.66	0.48	3.76	1.02	0.90	1.19
35 theory d) hygiene	4.45	0.78	3.90	1.21	0.55	0.55
35 theory e) nutrition	3.41	0.98	2.93	1.07	0.48	0.47
35 theory f) human resource management	4.41	0.83	3.76	1.15	0.65	0.67
35 theory g) law	4.14	0.88	3.03	0.98	1.11	1.19
35 theory h) management	4.79	0.41	3.83	1.10	0.96	1.28
35 theory i) research methods	3.93	0.92	3.24	0.95	0.69	0.74
36 given extra support	4.69	0.54	3.00	1.25	1.69	1.88
37 undertake work experience	4.40	0.87	3.80	1.16	0.60	0.59
38 students influence a) content	3.72	1.10	2.24	1.09	1.48	1.35
38 students influence b) process	3.78	0.80	2.63	1.01	1.15	1.27
38 students influence c) assessment method	3.35	1.16	2.77	1.07	0.58	0.52
39 experience HI skills	4.61	0.57	3.50	1.23	1.11	1.23
39a) HI skills part of academic	4.00	0.78	3.26	1.26	0.74	0.72
39b) HI skills during work experience	4.67	0.56	3.96	1.19	0.71	0.80
39b) experience in i) reception	4.11	1.14	3.00	1.47	1.11	0.89
39b) experience in ii) kitchen	3.96	1.16	3.27	1.12	0.69	0.57
39b) experience in iii) restaurant	4.44	0.70	4.08	0.89	0.36	0.44
40 main focus a) personal	4.30	0.67	3.44	0.85	0.86	1.12
40 main focus b) general attributes	4.46	0.64	3.32	0.86	1.14	1.52
40 main focus c) HI attributes	4.46	0.74	3.93	0.98	0.53	0.63
41 employers affect course content	4.29	0.66	2.29	0.96	2.00	2.54
42 teaching strategies a) CAL	4.56	0.89	3.56	1.01	1.00	1.05
42 teaching strategies b) lectures	4.33	0.92	4.37	0.84	-0.04	-0.05
42 teaching strategies c) seminars	4.54	0.58	3.77	0.95	0.77	1.00
42 teaching strategies d) tutorials	4.38	0.85	3.46	1.17	0.92	0.91
42 teaching strategies e) self study materials	3.89	0.92	3.50	1.14	0.39	0.45
42 teaching strategies f) group activities	4.34	0.61	3.90	0.98	0.44	0.57
42 teaching strategies g) dissertation	4.17	0.85	4.24	0.87	-0.07	-0.08
42 teaching strategies h) students presentations	4.55	0.57	3.66	0.97	0.89	1.16

Table 39: Students means

item number and summary	mean ideal	SD	mean actual	SD	mean difference	standardised difference
1a) written English	4.39	0.77	3.74	0.75	0.65	0.89
1b) spoken English	4.36	0.78	3.75	0.81	0.61	0.81
2 use info for decisions	4.37	0.74	3.65	0.74	0.72	0.97
3 manipulate financial data	4.22	0.84	3.23	0.99	0.99	1.09
4 solutions to problems	4.29	0.74	3.48	0.78	0.81	1.08
5 computers a) word processing	4.50	0.74	3.87	1.01	0.63	0.81
5 computers b) spreadsheets	4.32	0.78	3.32	1.03	1.00	1.10
5 computers c) databases	4.03	0.88	3.04	1.08	0.99	1.02
5 computers d) booking systems	3.93	0.96	2.70	1.17	1.23	1.17
5 computers e) information retrieval	4.31	0.85	3.46	1.01	0.85	0.93
6 interact with people	4.46	0.69	3.68	0.96	0.78	0.94
7 other language	3.64	1.25	2.23	1.15	1.41	1.20
8 operate as junior manager	4.20	0.93	3.18	1.03	1.02	1.05
9 apply general management	4.33	0.74	3.29	0.91	1.04	1.28
10 act independently	4.22	0.76	3.45	0.93	0.77	0.94
11 set personal targets	4.25	0.79	3.11	0.99	1.14	1.27
12 work in a team	4.55	0.64	3.71	1.04	0.84	1.00
13 know management theory	4.32	0.77	3.64	0.90	0.68	0.82
14a) interpret numerical information	4.04	0.89	2.98	0.92	1.06	1.16
14b) interpret verbal information	4.20	0.79	3.47	0.88	0.73	0.91
15 retrieve information	4.28	0.82	3.58	0.96	0.70	0.79
16 plan working a) personally	4.23	0.72	3.38	0.91	0.85	0.92
16 plan working b) for others	4.02	0.81	3.13	0.91	0.89	1.06
17 adequate numeracy	4.32	0.89	3.27	0.95	1.05	1.14
18 appreciation of professional ethics	4.35	0.69	3.48	0.99	0.87	1.04
19 competent in operational skills	4.30	0.79	3.33	1.01	0.97	1.09
19a) reception skills	3.98	0.89	2.56	1.25	1.42	1.33
19b) kitchen skills	3.85	0.93	2.95	1.02	0.90	0.96
19c) restaurant skills	3.98	0.90	3.16	1.16	0.82	0.82
20 knows a number of sectors	4.47	0.75	3.52	1.02	0.95	1.07
20a) hotel sector	4.48	0.71	3.88	0.88	0.60	0.75
20b) restaurant sector	4.30	0.75	3.54	1.01	0.76	0.85
20c) travel agency sector	3.58	1.18	2.33	1.16	1.25	1.08
20d) fast food sector	3.38	1.14	2.49	1.13	0.89	0.78
20e) conference sector	3.84	1.05	2.55	1.13	1.29	1.18
20f) special event sector	3.86	0.92	2.51	1.09	1.35	1.32
21 depth study of a sector	4.48	0.72	3.75	1.08	0.73	0.81
22 comparable academic	4.36	0.76	3.34	1.04	1.02	1.12
23 concepts for higher management	4.40	0.76	3.39	0.99	1.01	1.17
24 equipped for HI employment	4.52	0.73	3.83	0.89	0.69	0.87
25 equipped for outside HI	4.31	0.80	3.56	0.92	0.75	0.89
26a) skills for personal CPD	4.41	0.64	3.75	0.87	0.66	0.88
26b) skills for professional CPD	4.43	0.71	3.69	0.85	0.74	0.96
27 cover full range of outcomes	4.30	0.77	3.38	0.93	0.92	1.09
28 in proportion to learning time	4.30	0.71	3.22	1.03	1.08	1.25
29 ensure a minimum in all	4.33	0.87	3.58	1.04	0.75	0.80
30 variety of formats	4.23	0.79	3.38	0.96	0.85	0.97
31 assessment a) examination	3.92	0.86	3.79	0.98	0.13	0.13
31 assessment b) open book	3.40	1.16	2.86	1.14	0.54	0.42
31 assessment c) seminars	3.71	0.98	3.23	0.96	0.48	0.47
31 assessment d) written assignments	4.40	0.73	4.21	0.78	0.19	0.25

Table 39: Students' means *(continued)*

31 assessment e) reports	4.30	0.83	3.97	0.90	0.33	0.36
31 assessment f) practical tests	3.90	1.08	2.98	1.20	0.92	0.85
31 assessment g) dissertation	4.14	0.97	4.02	1.12	0.12	0.11
31 assessment h) oral presentations	4.03	1.12	3.29	1.21	0.74	0.65
32 some integrated assessments	3.89	0.90	3.38	1.02	0.51	0.54
33 all assessments count	3.68	1.20	3.25	1.14	0.43	0.37
34 ensure individual completion	4.16	1.00	3.46	1.13	0.70	0.68
35 theory a) marketing	4.34	0.81	3.98	0.87	0.36	0.44
35 theory b) foreign language	3.50	1.22	2.72	1.30	0.78	0.92
35 theory c) accounting	3.99	0.93	3.14	1.06	0.85	0.86
35 theory d) hygiene	3.77	1.09	2.91	1.24	0.86	0.74
35 theory e) nutrition	3.31	1.24	2.36	1.14	0.95	0.82
35 theory f) human resource management	4.45	0.74	3.92	0.95	0.53	0.62
35 theory g) law	3.97	1.05	2.71	1.15	1.26	1.15
35 theory h) management	4.62	0.69	3.95	0.98	0.67	0.82
35 theory i) research methods	4.21	0.88	3.15	1.24	1.06	1.00
36 given extra support	4.51	0.79	2.79	1.11	1.72	1.82
37 undertake work experience	4.38	0.95	4.04	1.11	0.34	0.33
38 students influence a) content	4.10	0.87	2.46	1.25	1.64	1.57
38 students influence b) process	4.05	0.87	2.57	1.11	1.48	1.49
38 students influence c) assessment method	4.02	0.94	2.47	1.16	1.55	1.48
39 experience HI skills	4.40	0.71	3.29	1.05	1.11	1.27
39a) HI skills part of academic	4.20	0.72	3.13	1.01	1.07	1.25
39b) HI skills during work experience	4.43	0.74	3.82	1.03	0.61	0.68
39b) experience in i) reception	4.12	0.98	3.12	1.23	1.00	0.92
39b) experience in ii) kitchen	3.76	1.04	3.06	1.09	0.70	0.68
39b) experience in iii) restaurant	3.93	1.02	3.51	1.05	0.42	0.41
40 main focus a) personal	4.04	0.78	3.21	0.94	0.83	0.98
40 main focus b) general attributes	4.26	0.82	3.25	1.00	1.01	1.12
40 main focus c) HI attributes	4.30	0.77	3.71	0.87	0.59	0.73
41 employers affect course content	3.86	1.09	2.41	1.10	1.45	1.30
42 teaching strategies a) CAL	4.21	0.88	3.02	1.13	1.19	1.17
42 teaching strategies b) lectures	4.40	0.75	4.08	0.95	0.32	0.39
42 teaching strategies c) seminars	4.32	0.80	3.56	1.04	0.76	0.84
42 teaching strategies d) tutorials	4.29	0.92	3.57	1.09	0.72	0.82
42 teaching strategies e) self study materials	4.02	0.92	3.35	1.06	0.67	0.68
42 teaching strategies f) group activities	3.75	1.10	3.33	1.09	0.42	0.40
42 teaching strategies g) dissertation	4.10	0.94	3.78	1.09	0.32	0.30
42 teaching strategies h) students presentations	4.07	0.96	3.31	1.05	0.76	0.76

Appendix IV: Factor analysis

IV.1 Introduction

This section explains what is meant by factor analysis and its applicability to data such as in the main study.

Factor analysis is a technique used to analyse complex data with the objective of determining whether it is possible to group variables together because they are connected in terms of what they represent. Consequently it can be described as a technique for data reduction, which is concerned with simplifying data to make it easier to understand and explain (Field, 2000).

The rationale of using factor analysis is to reduce the data by deriving a number of uncorrelated factors from the original interrelated variables; the number of factors being smaller than the number of variables (Field, 2000). This achieves parsimony by using the smallest number of factors to explain the largest amount of common variance (Field, 2000)

Thus the purpose of the analysis is to identify underlying conceptual groupings amongst the items on the questionnaire, and to achieve a "simple structure". The term simple structure is used to describe the situation where each variable loads significantly onto only one factor, and no variable loads significantly onto more than one factor.

Factor analysis can be exploratory or confirmatory depending upon the amount of information which is available. Exploratory factor analysis uses a set of data to try to determine if it is possible to draw out the dimensions that can be used to explain the particular concept under scrutiny. The objective is to simplify the issue in order to aid

understanding, and perhaps make it easier to define and measure particular constructs of a concept (Stevens, 1996). Confirmatory factor analysis uses the data to confirm an hypothesis about the number and types of factors based on previous work carried out in the area under consideration. This became possible when computer packages were developed specifically for this purpose. Factor analysis was originally devised to try to ascertain factors and derive hypotheses from sets of data (*i.e.* exploratory), and this is the procedure that was used in the current study.

IV.2 Appropriateness of the data set

In order to use factor analysis satisfactorily, it is necessary to have a large enough set of data for the underlying factors to emerge. Kline (1994) reports that authors have varied widely in their view as to the size of the sample required. Kline suggests that 100 samples are *"quite sufficient"* for a satisfactory factor analysis, although other authors recommend more are needed, and Kline himself admits that the larger the sample the better. Field (2000) in a review of papers by several authors concludes that a sample of 300 seems to be adequate for most situations, although the factor loadings (see later) should also be considered. Another issue with regard to the sample size is the ratio of subjects to variables, the requirements for which have also been noted as widely varying between different authors by both Kline and Field. Some authors suggest a figure as large as 15:1 subjects to variables, but Kline claims a ratio of as low as 2:1 can be satisfactory (Kline, 1994).

At the preliminary stage in the analysis, Field (2000) suggests using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. These two statistics give an indication of whether the data is appropriate for factor analysis. The first is self explanatory, the second indicates whether the variables are completely independent of each other *i.e.* there is no correlation between them. If this is the case,

then by definition there are no factors to identify as each factor indicates a group of variables that are related to each other. It follows that factor analysis is inappropriate if no such connections exist.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin values range from 0 to 1, Field (2000) suggests that the value should be greater than 0.5 if the sample size is adequate. He further suggests that *"values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, values between 0.8. and 0.9 are great"* Field, 2000, p. 455). The Bartlett's test produces a χ^2 statistic and significance level - the null hypothesis being that that the data set forms an identity matrix with all variables independent of each other. Consequently a high χ^2 and a low significance indicates a rejection of the null hypothesis and that factor analysis is appropriate.

IV.3 Type of factor analysis

Although the general term factor analysis is used for the sort of procedures described in this section, some authors (Kline, 1994) draw a clear distinction between the various methods on theoretical grounds. There are various methods of computation of the factors but with a reasonably large data set such as used in this study, the various methods produce very similar results (Field, 2000). This view is confirmed by Kline (1994) and Cattell (1978) who, whilst noting some theoretical and mathematical differences, also state that in practice the differences between the results generated are likely to be trivial. The difference is primarily mathematical. Of the two main methods principal components analysis uses all the variance for the analysis whereas factor analysis uses only the shared variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

There seems to be general agreement that principal components analysis is generally the most advisable procedure.

IV.4 Number of components to extract

The number of components to extract is discussed at some length by several authors (Stevens, 1996; Field, 2000) and various methods are suggested. The two most commonly suggested are the use of the Kaiser test and the "scree plot". The Kaiser test selects as many factors as have an eigen value of more than 1, and is the default option on the computer programme being used.

The eigen value is a measure of the proportion of the variance described by the factor under consideration. Often therefore, the larger eigen values represent the more important factors. However Stevens (1996) cautions against this assumption pointing out that although a particular factor may only account for a small proportion, the actual factor could be very important in the overall area under study. Cattell (1978) claims that in large matrices such as in the present study, the use of the Kaiser method can greatly overestimate the appropriate number of factors to extract. The scree plot developed by Cattell (1978) produces a graph from a plot of eigen values against factor number. This usually produces a steeply descending graph followed by a levelling off, which indicates the point at which the factors become less important (i.e. explain only a small amount of the variance).

The general point is to identify the minimum number of factors that can satisfactorily explain the data. Although there is necessarily a subjective element to using the scree plot, it has been shown to be reliable (Stevens, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

IV.5 Factor loadings

A factor loading represents the extent to which a particular variable correlates to a given factor, as it is a type of correlation coefficient the value can range from –1 to +1.

The actual factor loading should be of a minimum value if it is to be included in the analysis, and the variable considered to be linked to that factor.

Various authors have suggested values for the minimum to be considered (Kline, 1994). Commonly a value of ≥ 0.3 is considered moderately high and worthy of note whereas ≥ 0.6 is regarded as high (Field, 2000). Stevens (1996) links sample size to the value to be used by means of a statistically derived procedure to indicate significance. Tabachnick & Fidell (2001) suggest that the researcher should make a decision about what should be regarded as a salient value for the factor loading. This decision should be based on the interpretation of the factors.

IV.6 Rotation

Subsequent to extraction of the factors it is usual and useful to rotate them in order to aid interpretation by maximising the loading of the variables onto a particular factor whilst minimising it on the rest. This is achieved by regarding each factor as an axis, and the loadings of the variables as being plotted using these axes which each have scale from +1 to -1. Then the axes can be rotated around each other at the zero point so that the cluster of the plotted variables are intersected by the factor axes on which they are loaded most highly (Field, 2000).

Rotations fall into two types: a) orthogonal and b) oblique. Orthogonal rotation is most appropriate when factors are unrelated; the rotation maintains the factor axes in an unrelated form perpendicular to each other. Oblique rotation is most appropriate when factors have some relation to each other and the rotation allows this relationship to be shown. Cattell (1978) suggests always using oblique rotation, as this method will in fact produce an orthogonal rotation if this is appropriate, whereas by definition an orthogonal rotation will produce only that. The process is a mathematically complex iterative procedure which is only possible by means of a computer. In SPSS the

procedure is known as “Direct Oblimin” is one of the oblique options, and the one recommended by Field (2000).

The principle of the process is to achieve a "simple structure". This means that the factor matrix shows each factor has a few high loading variables with low loadings from the other variables.

The factors have then to be interpreted. The factors are examined and a judgement made as to the main focus of the factors. These are labelled appropriately to allow for suitable discussion.